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✓ a Moose  
Linas College  
1919

SERMONS  
FOR  
THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

VOL. VIII.

BY THE LATE  
REV. JOHN KEBLE,  
AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR."

SOLD BY  
JAMES PARKER AND CO. OXFORD,  
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

1882.

1891

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SERMONS

FOR

THE SUNDAYS AFTER TRINITY

PART I.

SUNDAYS I—XII.

BY THE LATE

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## SERMON I.

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### STEPS TOWARDS HEAVEN

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 S. PETER i. 5, 6.

*“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance.”*

WE have lately finished the solemn course of the Church's great days, beginning with Advent and ending on Trinity Sunday. Those days have brought before us, one after another, the great truths of the Creed, the several parts of that “Catholic Faith, which except a man keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.”

If we have seriously turned our hearts to them as they came before us one by one ; if we have earnestly tried to believe and to love Christ, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, Christ suffering, crucified, dead and buried, Christ descending into hell, rising again the third day, ascending into heaven, sitting at the Right Hand of the Father ; Christ sending His Holy Spirit to set up His Holy Catholic Church, and call us to partake therein of the Communion of saints and the Forgiveness of sins ; finally, Christ coming at the end of the world to

judge the quick and the dead ; raising our bodies, and endowing saints with life everlasting : if we have gone on believing and loving our Lord and Saviour in all these manifestations of Himself ; so far it is well : we may hope we have the right Faith ; we have made a good beginning in the way of holiness.

We cannot be too thankful to Him, Who, without any works or deservings of ours, hath bestowed on us so great a gift ; and the best way of shewing our thankfulness will of course be this : not to stand waiting, but at once to set about doing whatever God would have us to do next.

“ My heart hath talked of Thee,” says the Psalmist ; and surely many a heart here must have talked deeply within itself, of the astonishing mercies which God made Man has wrought for us : “ My heart hath talked of Thee : seek ye My Face.” We have felt His secret silent voice within us, entreating, urging, pressing us, by all His goodness, and by all our hopes, to look away from the world and to look after Him ; to turn away from the false, miserable delights which the flesh and the devil pretend to offer us, and to seek what He offers to His saints,—the light of His countenance, the ineffable joy of beholding Him, face to Face.

Our heart hath talked of God : “ Seek ye My Face ;” let not us be slow to answer, “ Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.” Thou hast drawn us, and we will “ run after Thee ;” Thou hast called to us, as to Saul, from heaven ; we see the light which is “ above the brightness of the sun.” What other answer can we make than S. Paul’s own ? “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?”



Surely, if we have a spark of true love, we shall not be content merely to receive so great blessings, and admire God's mercy in giving them to us so unworthy persons, and not try to do some little for His sake. We shall not surely rest, until we have done some little, towards the further coming of that glorious and blessed kingdom, which we feel to be all the world to ourselves. There must be something added to our faith, else we shall be neither safe nor perfect.

What is that something? what must we do, to work out that glorious and holy work of God, which He hath begun in us, by causing us to believe in Him Whom He hath sent?

See how S. Peter addresses himself to beginners, such as the most part of us are: "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." He says: "According as His Divine Power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . . exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust:" so do you in like manner give yourselves entirely to Him. Be not content with believing and admiring the Gospel: do not only thank God for His graces, but actually take and use them.

"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance." Here is a kind of scale mounting upwards, a ladder like that which Jacob saw in his dream, a ladder of evangelical graces, whose foot rests indeed on the earth, but its top reaches to heaven. "Giving

all diligence;" that is its simple beginning; that is the foot of the ladder, resting on the earth. By diligence, is meant serious, earnest attention. That is the very first step, the alphabet, the foundation of it all. Seriously and in earnest attend to God's will concerning you.

I speak to all, but more especially to those, who having been instructed in the Faith, and believing it, are now about to seal it in Confirmation. You have obtained the like precious faith with us; you have given an account of that faith: let not the next thing be, that you have turned your thoughts altogether another way. At least be serious; at least make up your mind that you will not forget the great things which have now passed one by one before you. "With purpose of heart cleave to the Lord." Intend, really and in truth, to please Him, and not to go on like children all your lives, pleasing yourselves for the present, with no thought of what will come of it in eternity.

The first thing then is to be serious, in abiding by the Faith which you have learned; not to let it pass by, like mere words, making no impression on your mind. The next is, to "add to your faith virtue." "Virtue" seems here to mean a certain courage and activity of mind, which will not easily be alarmed or put to shame, when it is seeking to do God service. It is the temper of those who are not contented with being just as good as their neighbours, but rather take our Lord at His word, when He says, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Again, it is the temper of those who do not stand

wishing and waiting and hesitating, but plunge at once, with Naaman, into the overflowing waters of goodness, when the Prophet of God calls them. They are like S. Peter, stripping himself of all incumbrances, and casting himself into the sea to meet our Lord, as soon as ever He came in sight.

It is an instance of this sort of virtue, or Christian courage, when young people, perceiving what is right, will not suffer themselves to be hindered from doing it by the foolish talk and laughter of their companions and others; or again, when they enter resolutely, but soberly, on courses of Christian self-denial, overcoming their past slothful and self-indulgent habits. This is fighting the Lord's battles manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

This you must add to your faith, for without it faith is a dead and useless thing; just as a soldier's wishing well to the cause in which he is engaged will do no good, if he have no heart to obey his commander's call. You know the Creed and the commandments; you are sure it is all very good, and you are ready to pledge yourself to keep it: so far is well; but it will be much better, in sight both of God and man, when it is seen that you are ready also to put yourself out of the way, to endure loss, pain, or inconvenience, for the sake of fulfilling your vow.

In the third place, to faith and courage you must add knowledge. There must be Christian forethought, discretion, wisdom, prudence, to make the most of our faith and courage, and hinder us from falling into hurtful mistakes. S. Peter had both faith and courage, when he, knowing that our Lord



was the Christ, and not fearing danger in His cause, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. He had both faith and virtue, but as yet he wanted knowledge. God had not yet taught his heart "by the sending to him the light of His Holy Spirit," as He did on the Day of Pentecost : therefore he had not yet "a right judgement in all things."

Such a judgement is a very special gift, a thing to be most earnestly prayed for, over and over. Let us suppose that you have faith, your heart is set upon the great things out of sight, you are willing to live above the world and the body ; and we will suppose that you have virtue or fortitude also, that is, a brave and determined spirit, really to set about what you understand to be right : yet without this further gift of knowledge, you may go very wrong ; you may ignorantly put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; you may put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ; and this with very evil consequences to others as well as to yourself.

Pray therefore very earnestly, as often as you set about any thing of consequence, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" Enquire of those who are set over you, and of your friends, who you see are walking in the fear of God ; treasure up the sayings of Holy Scripture, of the Prayer-book, and of other good books, which you perceive to be suitable to your own case : watch the ways of God's fatherly providence, His strict yet most merciful guidance, plain to your conscience, though unknown to all others : above all, never trifle with yourself or with Him in plain matters of right and wrong ; never play



the hypocrite, nor turn away your thoughts from known truth, nor hide your eyes from a duty because it is unpleasant.

If you thus draw nigh unto God, He will surely draw nigh unto you. If you seek heavenly wisdom early, she will be found of you : you will have knowledge, to guide your faith and virtue. God's Word will be "a lantern to your feet and a light unto your paths." Your faith putting you in the right road, and your virtue giving you a heart to overcome its difficulties, He will give you knowledge also, to discern what those difficulties are, and the way to overcome them.

Faith, virtue, knowledge : it is "a threefold cord, not quickly broken ;" yet it may and will be broken, if we do not add temperance or continency to it ; which therefore the Apostle mentions in the next place. Continency is the keeping one's self in order, the resisting of pleasures, the overcoming the appetites of meat and drink, and other bodily enjoyments.

How necessary this is, you may judge by seeing what great persons have fallen through weakness into sensual sin, and so have lost their place in God's favour ; or if they lost it not for ever, were saved only so as by fire. David and Solomon ; the wisest of men, and the man after God's own heart ; who shall deny that these had faith, virtue, and knowledge ? Yet both these fell, and fell miserably, for want of keeping under the body. David took another man's wife, and, to hide the sin, contrived the murder of the husband : Solomon was led, by his love of strange women, to worship the idols of the heathen. Whether Solomon ever repented seems uncertain ; and of David

we know, that although he did repent, yet he suffered very severely. The whole of his after life was bitter to him, and very sore judgements fell upon his family.

Of all things then, I beseech you, be careful to add to your knowledge temperance. Be not carried away by bodily pleasures; practise yourself discreetly, but really, in fasting; learn to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one knows, till he has tried, what life and spirit and truth it will add, almost without his knowing it, to his way of doing his duty, if he does but regularly practise himself in one real self-denial for Christ's sake.

For instance, if young persons, wishing to do more for the poor, were to make a rule of having fewer new clothes, spending less in apparel than many others do, or less than themselves used to do; I say that such a rule, made and kept in the fear of God, will bring a blessing upon all their ways. The Holy Spirit, to reward them, will very soon put into their hearts other holy desires, and other good counsels; which, if encouraged, will ripen into just works.

Who can doubt that the poor widow, who cast all she had into the treasury of God, obtained His blessing on her other works and ways also? She denied herself of her living for that day, for the sake of God and His poor: thus she added temperance to her faith, and virtue, and knowledge.

But, even with this addition, several things still remain to make up the true Christian Apostolical character. We must add to our temperance patience, and to our patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. Truly the work is too great, far too great, for fallen

and corrupt man, had we not the Blessed Spirit to help us : but with Him all things are possible.

But I shall endeavour to say something more of these last heavenly graces on another Sunday. For the present, consider only, I beseech you, how great your work is in one sense, in another how easy, how completely within your own power. It is indeed the greatest of all works, beyond all outward miracles, to make an unbelieving person faithful, one slothful in heavenly matters diligent, the cowardly virtuous, the ignorant knowing, the self-indulgent strict and temperate : yet is it, in a very true sense, within the power of every one of us to set effectually about that great change. Take the very next occasion ; the very next temptation that befalls you ; take care that in it you are on God's side, not on the devil's ; and it will help you, perhaps, more than you think of, in all these respects.

Only be sincere, be earnest, in that one rule of trying to please our Lord in all things, Who parted with all to do you good ; and all things will turn out good for you in a wonderful manner. For though we speak of these qualities, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, as if they were four different things, they are not really such ; they may be all practised together ; all will grow together, like flowers in a garden, in an honest and good heart. God grant that they may grow in ours ; and in the hearts of all who are in any way dependent upon us ! God give us His heavenly grace, to spread over our whole life, like the sun rising in a morning, which goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof !



## SERMON II.

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### MORE STEPS TOWARDS HEAVEN.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 S. PETER i. 6, 7.

*“Add . . . to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.”*

THERE are two opposite errors, into one or both of which most persons are apt to fall, when they think or speak of the great subject of Christian holiness, of pleasing God and keeping His commandments. The commonest disposition perhaps is, to look at some one person whom we love and admire, some one good and amiable temper for which we feel a liking, and where we see that, there at once to imagine that all is of course right, and that there is no occasion to be anxious. How many of the poor, for instance, count a man good at once, and set him down, living or dead, as an Angel from heaven, if he be but open-handed, and kind to those who are in need; and such an one may be in God's sight inwardly unclean, proud, covetous, in the very highest degree. Again, how common is it for one young

person to become fond of another, and long to make a friend of him, because of his good-nature, good temper, and courtesy ! yet very deadly sins may very well go along with those amiable qualities.

On the other hand, when instead of the deceiving, disappointing characters we meet with in real life, we go straight to the holy Book of God, and there enquire what He would have us to do, we light, not seldom, upon such a list of rare virtues and noble graces, that we are altogether at fault the other way : we say to ourselves, If all this be necessary, who then can be saved ? I can readily imagine such a thought coming into a man's heart when he reads our Saviour's Blessings, pronounced in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, on the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, them that hunger and thirst after righteousness : I can imagine him saying, What a world of glories is here ! what a gathering together of bright lights, such as surely were never found adorning any one living man, except Him Who is both God and Man ! How is it possible that such a one as I am should ever be any thing like this ? And when we come to find out, what Scripture plainly teaches, that not one nor two only, but all the Saints have been such as this ; well may our hearts sink within us, and we may say to ourselves, what once was said to our Saviour, Who then can be saved ? The disciples uttered that cry, on being told that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. They thought sadly in their hearts, Who then can be saved ? since all naturally love riches,

and had rather be rich than poor. They spoke with reference to one only of the many graces of the perfect saintly character; to them it seemed too much to expect, that any should be poor in spirit, should prefer poverty to riches, and so enter into the kingdom of heaven: of course, when all the rest was added, meekness, peaceableness, purity of heart, and the rest, it must have cast them into utter despair: over and over again they might say to themselves, Who then can be saved? "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With man this is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." If you were left to yourselves, it would indeed be beyond your power; the smallest portion of a saint's virtue would be more than you could attain unto. But you are not left to yourselves. As Christians, you have God to help you, God the Holy Ghost dwelling in your hearts: and with God all things are possible. He can change the heart, and renew the Spirit: He can make Christ's yoke easy, and His burthen light.

So in respect of S. Peter's account of what a Christian should add to his faith: if we had nothing to depend on but our own power or holiness, it would indeed be a hopeless task, to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and the rest. But as it is, the Spirit of power and love having been given us in Holy Baptism, we know that these things are not beyond our power, provided only that we take care not to drive away that good Spirit by our sins.

And it may help us in thinking of this, if we notice carefully what a force and virtue there is in



true affection of any kind, to alter a man's whole heart and conduct ; not one part only, but all of it. The true love of a wife, or child, of a kind friend, or of a gracious benefactor, when it really takes possession of a man, will make a wonderful change in his whole behaviour. It will cause him to deny himself, for the sake of pleasing and profiting those whom he loves : and when once that lesson is learned, there is no saying how greatly a person may improve in a very short time. So it is with a Christian person, if he will give himself up in earnest to the true love of God, when the Holy Spirit has begun to shed it abroad in his heart. It will make all the difference to him in all respects. It will give him faith, for he will set his heart on the things above, which are out of sight, and will order all his ways with a view to them. It will give him courage : he will not mind dangers nor difficulties, so he can please Christ Whom he loves. It will give him knowledge : when we love any one, it makes us quick and sharp in finding out what will please the beloved person. It will give him temperance : ordinary selfish pleasures will be nothing to him, because Christ, Whom he loves, is not in them.

Thus we may in some measure understand, how this one great thing, the Love of God, being truly received into a man's heart, brings with it all other good and holy principles, and makes that possible, nay, easy, which is in itself far beyond all the wisdom and strength of man. The Love of God can do this, because it is, in fact, the Spirit of God moving our hearts ; and how can any thing be too hard for the Almighty Spirit of the Most High God ?

Another thing to be considered is this. When the Scripture, as here by S. Peter, reckons up various duties, one after another, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and so on : we are apt to imagine that these great things are to be learned one by one, one after another ; and finding ourselves so imperfect in the very first, we say to ourselves, how ever shall we be sufficient for this great and manifold task ? how ever will our life be long enough for it ? And so we are tempted to give up our good endeavours in despair. But the truth is, these several things, faith, virtue, knowledge, and the rest, though they are distinct in themselves, are not distinct, not apart from each other in time, but go on together ; true and hearty love, as I just now said, will teach them to us all at once. It is as if some officer were to give direction to a soldier on guard, and say to him, Add to your courage, caution ; and to your caution, soberness ; and to your soberness, wakefulness ; and to your wakefulness, silence ; and to your silence, presence of mind ; and so on. Were a person to speak so, he would not of course mean that one of these good qualities should be practised at one time, another at another, but that all should be practised always ; and, perhaps, he might add, that if a soldier had his heart in his duty, of course he would practise all these : which would be just like saying, where the true love of God is, there will be faith, virtue, knowledge, and all the rest. Men do not learn them one at a time, though circumstances may sometimes force one or more of them to be practised and exercised more than the rest ; but they begin, and grow, and



are perfected or decay together, with the growth of the body itself; or the branches of a tree with the growth of the tree.

It is, moreover, very manifest, that the several graces and virtues of the Christian character, give great help one to another. Each one of those which S. Peter here mentions will be the more easily attained, if we be careful to practise the one which he mentions next before it. For instance, I will speak first of that, at which I left off in my former examination of these words. Add to temperance, says the Apostle, patience. Now we know what temperance is, as the Apostle here would have us understand it. It means not merely keeping from excess of meat and drink, but also keeping in order our whole bodies, and our bodily pleasures and refreshments, our senses, and the desires of our hearts. We are told to practise this, and add to it patience: *i. e.* not only to abstain from all dependence on bodily pleasures, but also to make up our minds to the quiet endurance of bodily pain and sickness, and also to the disappointment and anguish of the heart. Now if you think a moment, you will presently see what a help one of these must be to the other. Abstinence from pleasures prepares both the mind and body to endure pains. "Endure hardness," says S. Paul to Timothy, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Learn to do without softnesses, indulgences, enjoyments: lie hard, live hard, sleep, eat, and drink sparingly, that you may not shrink from Christ's warfare when it waxes hot; that you may be hardened against the trials and evils which the devil or man will work against you.

And you will observe that the Apostles, both S. Peter and S. Paul, give this advice to every one. They do not say, You that have reason to expect trials and troubles, prepare yourself for them by temperance, patience, and self-denial ; but they say to all Christians whatever, Endure hardness ; add to your knowledge, temperance, and patience. We have all need of patience : one and all, we have great need of it. Sooner or later we must all bear our cross ; only He will give us our choice, whether we will take it unwillingly, and with fretful hearts, like the impenitent thief by our Lord's Cross : or rather, with humble, lowly, yet hopeful spirits, like him who relented, and who saw Christ that day in Paradise. When, therefore, you are trying yourself, as before God, to see if you are fit for Confirmation, ask yourself such questions as these : Am I better able to endure both pleasure and pain than I used to be ? Do I refuse occasionally what I might innocently take, that I may the more thoroughly keep myself in order ? When troubles come upon me, little or great, do I try to make that use of them which God intended ? to soften my heart towards those who are in distress, and to turn it more and more away from this world ?

This is that patience which the Apostle in this place so earnestly exhorts us to labour after : and to encourage us, he signifies that it will bring after it godliness. Giving all diligence, add to your patience godliness. What is godliness ? It is seriousness, awe, reverence. It is having a deep sense of His presence, Who is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. Who would not wish

to have such a mind as this, that he never should feel quite alone, but always carry about with him the sure and certain thought of the Invisible Eye watching, the Invisible Hand stretched out to guide and support him? Who that has ever known what it is to have a kind father or mother, nurse, or teacher, or guardian, would not most earnestly rejoice, and think himself happy, to have the sense of such care as theirs made for ever present to his mind, even when otherwise he would seem most forlorn? Now such a sense of things is godliness. It is the natural and ordained fruit of afflictions well endured; it naturally follows after patience, if we will let it: just as we never feel more deeply the inestimable blessing of a kind friend, parent, or nurse, than when they have been waiting on us in heavy sickness or affliction. The more is the pity, that Christian sufferers should ever behave in such a way as to separate patience from godliness, which yet they seem to do, when they get over their cares and troubles by a sort of natural cheerfulness, or because they like to be thought courageous, and are never the nearer to God for them. Let young persons, especially beware of this; beware of taking things too lightly, too cheerfully. We are not to faint when we are rebuked of the Lord, but neither are we to despise His chastenings. We do well to let every thing put us in mind of His Presence, since in truth every thing is, one way or another, a token of that Presence. Thus shall we make patience and good temper, in the ordinary trials of life, minister to our devotion and godliness.

And godliness will bring brotherly kindness. As



we try to find our Creator and Redeemer in all things, we shall be led to find Him in His Church more particularly. For this is what the Scripture means by brotherly kindness: loving all around us as brethren, because they are members of the same Christ, children of the same God, inheritors of the same kingdom of heaven. And this comes naturally after godliness: nay, godliness is imperfect and unreal without it: for "this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also:" "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?" Ask yourselves, then, this further question; Are my serious thoughts of such a kind as to make me more loving and considerate, more attentive and obliging, to all around me, considering that they are members of the same Christ, and that what I do to them, Christ reckons done to Him? Because, if my godliness has not this effect on me, I have reason to fear that it is but a show of godliness, something hypocritical, something like that of the Pharisees. God defend us all from that snare!

And yet one thing remains. We must add to brotherly kindness charity. The love which for Christ's sake is so strong towards those who are united with us in Christ, must also for Christ's sake overflow towards all men; towards the heathen and unbelieving: towards those who are parted from Christ by their sins: towards those who use us ill, who judge us amiss, and speak unkindly of us. All persons must expect more or less trials of this kind: and most, young persons especially, are apt to imagine a great deal more of ill usage than really is intended. But

even the empty imagination may do them good, if they turn it into an occasion of charity, really forgiving, loving, and trying to serve, those whom they do but dream to have been in any way their enemies.

On the whole: many and great as the things which our Lord requires of us may seem, they are not, you see, too many, nor too great, for the least and simplest among us, if only he will set his heart to the keeping of his Baptismal vow; not in his own strength which is nothing, but in the strength of that good Spirit, Who is all in all.

### SERMON III.

#### WARNINGS HERE, OF THE FINAL SEPARATION OF THE SAVED AND THE LOST.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

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S. LUKE xvi. 26.

*“Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.”*

“BETWEEN us and you,” that is, between the good and the bad, between the saved and the lost; between Abraham and the faithful ones in his bosom on the one hand, and the rich man and such as were with him, lifting up their eyes in torments, on the other hand. Between these two sorts, our Lord Himself here tells us, there is a great gulph fixed, an impassable gulph, so that neither the righteous can come near the wicked to help them and make them better, nor yet the wicked, for the smallest moment, escape from their lot, and come nearer the portion of the righteous. In this world, we know, it is far otherwise. There are here the same two sorts of persons, good and bad, penitent and impenitent, some favoured of God, some in His displeasure: we live among

them, we know that we are ourselves of the number, but we cannot surely tell, which is which. So long as this world continues, the tares grow along with the wheat; those who have on the wedding-garment sit at the Feast beside those who have not; the good and corrupt fish are crowded together in the same net, and no eye but that which is All-seeing can clearly and positively distinguish between them. There is a line somewhere, but it is not in us to draw it.

But after we are once taken out of this world, all uncertainty on this awful question, it seems by the Scriptures, will presently be done away. That which was a hair's breadth here, hardly seeming to separate at all God's people from those of His enemy, will then be widened into a great gulph. Here it admits of change; it may be passed over: men are at liberty, with more or less pain and difficulty, to cross from God's side to the evil One's, or the contrary: but there it will be fixed; no more change possible; no more leave given to pass over from the rich man to Abraham; no more danger of forsaking Abraham and taking one's portion with the rich man.

Now this is, surely, a very serious, a very overpowering and dreadful thought: to be separated, at once and for ever, from all good persons, from all whom God loves, and to know that at no time, through all eternity, shall they have any other company than the evil spirits, the enemies of God, and those whom they have corrupted and made like themselves. And it is made unspeakably more dreadful, when we consider, that even that which our Lord describes, was but an earnest and token of something to come after, unspeakably worse. The rich man and Lazarus were



but in that middle state, where the souls both of good and bad are reserved in comfort or in anguish until the judgement of the great day. Whatever the one enjoyed or the other suffered, was but a pledge and as it were a taste of the more entire, most unspeakable joys and horrors which the nearer Presence of God will bring with it, when their souls and bodies shall again be joined together. If, even now, those who are asleep in the Lord are divided, in a way which we cannot imagine here, from such as have died in their sins ; how much more terrible, think you, will that parting be, which will happen in the day of Judgement ! when the impenitent shall not only find himself shut out from the company of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all who with them have entered into the kingdom of heaven, but will also have actually to enter into the home and company of the evil spirits, the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, which, as yet, separated as they are from the body, lost spirits only imagine and fear. And on the other hand, how glorious, beyond what we can dream of, how pure and bright without shade or blemish, the final condition of Christ's glorified saints in heaven, since even the rest and joy of the Patriarch Abraham in Paradise, having Lazarus in his bosom, is to be accounted but an imperfect thing in comparison of it !

To this awful, eternal consummation then we are one and all tending ; and it has pleased Him Who has prepared it for us, to give no slight nor questionable tokens of it, even amidst all the confusion and disorder of this present world. Bad and good, profane and holy, are indeed strangely mingled together :



yet a thoughtful eye may perceive, in many ways, the over-ruling Hand, sorting us off one from another, and preparing us by degrees for that eternal separation. It is but a faint twilight that we walk in, yet there are glimpses enough to shew, how great a difference the full daylight, when it arises, will make in the appearance of all things. Our life is full of shadows and images of the Day of account.

Consider, e. g. the natural shrinking and dislike which subsist between good and bad people, *as such*. Except there be some tie of kindred or neighbourhood, or some other such accidental cause, bringing them together in spite of themselves, nature herself teaches them to be shy of each other; the chaste man to abhor the impure; the honest man, the thief; the peaceable man, the haughty and quarrelsome: and so of all the rest. Now whenever we see one shrinking from another in this way: not for his worldly interest, but really for his character: we see something which may well remind us of Abraham and Lazarus, full of mercy and benignity as they were, declining so much as to wish or pray that they might pass the gulph to do the rich man some good. The horror, for example, which little children express, who have been at all educated in the fear of God, when they are first made aware of great and known sin in any person with whom they are in company, the way in which they draw back from him, as if he had some contagious sickness, may instruct such unhappy persons how they must expect the saints and Angels to look on them when they see them face to face. Still more significant, perhaps, and more awful, is the behaviour of holy and saintly persons, per-

sons who have tried to lead strict lives in the fear of God, and to keep their baptismal vows entire, when they are made aware of wilful impurity or hard-heartedness, dishonesty or lying, or any other deadly sin, in those with whom they have dealings. The higher their charity had been before, the more they had prayed and laboured for those persons' good, the graver and more severe will their thoughts and words be, when they find that they can no longer doubt the guilt of those whom they had trusted. From them we may judge a little, what stern countenances will be turned on the impenitent by those blessed and glorious spirits who will surround the Throne of the Judge in that Day. Every frown, every cold look, every severe word from Christ's servants here, should be a warning to thoughtless and wicked people of what is coming by and by: even as Christ Himself, when He looked round Him in anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts, would have had them fear what that look might prove to them, should it be turned on them again in anger when they and we all shall behold it. So our Lord would have them think, who were by and saw His awful countenance: and so He would have us think, when we read of such His looks. S. Peter did so think, and repented in earnest, when the Lord turned and looked on him: why should we not do the same, when He turns and looks on us, and would so check us in some of our many sins, our unkind talk, our rash judgments, our false-witness, our light profane ways, our irreverence and undutifulness, our encouragement of evil things? Why, I say, when in these or other ways we go to the very edge of what is

tolerable, or a little beyond it, and Christ, in the person of some friendly thoughtful Christian, would check us, though it were but by a look, why cannot we use ourselves to take the hint, if I may so call it, which our gracious Redeemer gives us? Why cannot we call up in our minds the idea of the Judge sitting on His Throne, the Books opened, and the page ready, in which our behaviour on this very occasion, as on all others, will be unerringly recorded? and why will we not learn and consider from our Christian friend's countenance now, what our Lord's will be then towards us, if we go before Him with a burthen of such warnings rejected on our conscience?

As the natural feelings of the good towards grievous sinners are one kind of shadow of the great separation, the gulph fixed in the other world, so another like token is the manner in which, even in the course of this world, men learn to avoid certain kinds of sinners, were it only with a view to their earthly comfort and well being. When a parent bids his son avoid expensive idle company: when a mother would have her daughter avoid those who live in pleasure, and seek such as adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety: when the doors of a Christian house are shut against those who would disturb it with riot and drunkenness, or defile it with sins not fit to be named: what are all these prudential cautions and directions, but tokens of that which will happen bye and bye, when God's children will be parted for ever from the very possibility of such communications, and His doors closed for ever against every thing that defileth? O that our young people had a little faith! but a very



little, yet just enough to believe that their parents and pastors and governors are in God's place to them! that their warnings are His warnings, their reproofs His reproofs, their rules His rules, when they are trying to preserve their charges from mischief! As it is, so entirely are unbelief and disobedience got into the very air we breathe, that parents seem even afraid to reprove their children, or other superiors those with whom they are trusted; or to deal at all strictly with them, lest they break away from them entirely. "For all this," as the prophet says, "His anger is not turned away, but His Hand is stretched out still." Whether young people regard it or no, it still remains true that their governors' commands and threatenings are a sign and pledge of what they must expect from Him Who will come to be their Judge. If they on earth, being evil and imperfect, know how to separate their children from the way of danger and corruption, how much more will the heavenly unerring Father separate the bad from the good, His enemies from His children, for ever! Yet people go on desperately mocking at the counsels of their elders and betters, and keeping just the company which they most earnestly forbid: which is as if they took pride, and thought it good amusement, to get on the fatal and deadly side of the gulph, while the Father and Redeemer of their souls were mercifully doing all to keep them on the right side.

We have seen how our own natural feelings, and how the conduct of our superiors, are continually supplying us with shadows of the great separation after death and judgement. When we open the Scriptures of God, we find, besides direct threatenings,

very many precepts to the same purpose; especially in the Proverbs of Solomon. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not: walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path. Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. Remove thy way far from the strange woman, and come not near the door of her house. Let not thine heart incline to her ways, go not astray in her paths: forsake the foolish and live." "A froward heart shall depart from me, I will not know a wicked person. I shall soon destroy all the ungodly that are in the land, that I may root out all wicked doers from the city of the Lord." All these precepts, and many more to the same effect, are to be found in Holy Scripture, signifying what God will do, when we are called out of this world, and stand helpless before His judgement-seat. What He enjoins us, He will do Himself: and as often as we read or hear these His strict laws, we are to look on to the day when He will so widen the gulph between the righteous and the wicked, that it will be impossible for us not to discern. We are to represent to our mind's eye the great gulph fixed, never to be passed over: on the one side Hell, and the rich man in it, with such as he was, lifting up their eyes in torments: on the other, Abraham, who, though outwardly likewise rich, had always been the servant of God, not of riches, and Lazarus, the patient good poor man, in his bosom. This is the picture we are to draw, by the blessing of God, in our own hearts, of what they will come to, who slight His cautions



and their parents', in regard of bad company. They will find too late, that they have been wilfully placing themselves on the wrong side of an impassable gulph. They will cry in vain, "Have mercy on me;" and will wish in vain that they could at least warn their unhappy companions whom they have left in the world, "lest they also come into that place of torment."

I have said nothing, as yet, of that which our gracious God intended to be the great warning of all, concerning the gulph which He has fixed in the abode of the dead. This His chief warning is the power which He gave to His Bishops and Priests to separate the righteous and the wicked by absolving the one and not absolving the other: admitting the one to the Holy Communion, and not admitting the other. We read in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that S. Paul had to exercise this power on a man who had been guilty of great and notorious sin: he "delivered him to Satan," i. e. turned him out of the Church which is God's Kingdom, into the world, which is Satan's: and when he repented, he received him back again. Now it was well understood, that this was a most awful punishment, because it was a rehearsing and declaring to men's eyes what God was doing with the same person in the unseen world, and what He would do with him at last, except he repented. What S. Paul did so loose and bind on earth, our Lord, they well knew, had promised, should be bound and loosed in Heaven. They thought a great deal of this: and we, if we were wise and dutiful, should, of course, think a great deal of the dealings of God's Priests with us, in encouraging us

to, or keeping us back from, the Holy Communion of Christ's Body and Blood. We should consider that, in all such proceedings, the Ministers of Christ, weak and deceivable as they are, are yet giving us a true token of His awful will, Who will come before long to see the guests at His Banquet, and will cause such as want the wedding garment to be cast into outer darkness.

All these differences the Almighty makes on earth between the righteous and the wicked, partly to keep us in understanding and believing the great division and difference of all, the gulph which He will fix between them in the world out of sight. He has also revealed to us the astonishing difference which sin has made between the two sorts of angels: those who kept and those who fell from, their first estate. At first they were created alike, but now darkness and light are not so opposite as those angels are one to another: and we are plainly taught both of the good and of the bad, that they are, severally, patterns and examples of what we are to come to. For, on the one hand, the fire into which the wicked shall be cast is prepared for the devil and his angels: on the other, God's children in the Resurrection shall be made like unto the Angels. To choose wrong instead of right, in any the most ordinary instance, is choosing so far to be a devil instead of an angel.

Let us firmly believe in this great difference, this gulph fixed between Abraham and the rich man: let us think of it often, and very seriously. It will keep us greatly against the confusion of this present evil world. And that we may have our portion with the Saints there, let us, as God's Church shall direct

and His Providence point out, put ourselves under the advice and example of those who truly serve Him here : watching their approbation and dislike, though silent : not always expecting them to give reasons in words, but accounting it likely, that they know many things by a sort of instinct : humbly welcoming their censure, as being certain it would be much severer if they knew all the truth of us, and shrinking from their praise, as knowing how little we deserve it. On the other hand, when we see carelessness, much more notorious sin, let us at least use reserve towards such persons : and if the Church require it, separate ourselves entirely from them : both for our own sake to escape corruption, and for theirs, that they may fear and repent.

While we live here, may that fearful gulph never be out of our thoughts and memory : that so, by God's merciful guiding, we may be found hereafter on Abraham's and Lazarus' side of it, and not on the side of that rich man, repenting when it is too late.

## SERMON IV.

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### CHRISTIAN COURAGE.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOSHUA i. 7.

*“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand nor to left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”*

WHO would not wish, if he might, to be brave and valiant? to be able to set about and continue his work and win his way through the world, undisturbed by those natural tormenting fears of death and pain and bodily suffering, of which we all know so much? Who does not admire those, who shew by their courage and calmness in dangerous and sharp trials, that they have got over these feelings, or at least know how to keep them in order? Who does not know at once what we mean, when we speak of a brave soldier or sailor? Who does not feel a certain swelling and lifting up of his heart, when he hears or reads of venturesome deeds boldly and steadily done? Indeed, these feelings are so natural,



that the chief danger concerning them is, lest we should think too much of the mere bodily courage, not unlike that of a wild beast, which many seem to have from their birth. But, my brethren, this is not true courage; else a lion or a bull or tiger, once made angry, would be more admirable than the bravest man. True Christian courage is just this, to fear God and His Son Jesus Christ so heartily, constantly, and entirely, as to be above all other fear. None of us ever can be perfect in it, so long as we are in this frail body and in this imperfect world: but the grace of God may and will do very great things for us, in the way of training and educating us to more and more perfection in this great virtue, if we for our part will pray and strive in earnest. And the book of God is full of noble examples, glorious patterns for young persons especially who desire to "quit them like men and be strong." The Church of God to-day directs our attention to one of them, to Joshua, the great leader and captain, whom the Lord raised up in the place of Moses to conduct His people into the land of Canaan, and to guide them in their long and bloody wars, till God had given them possession of it. <sup>a</sup>Our attention, my brethren, has been turned of late, more than may be quite good for all of us, to thoughts of war and conquest, and the kind of praise which the world gives to valiant soldiers. It is well that we should mark and learn what manner of soldier-ship *they* practised, on whom the Great King of heaven has set His mark as approved and faithful champions in His own great cause, dutiful and

<sup>a</sup> Preached at the time of the siege of Sevastopol in 1855.



loyal warriors in his own noble army. Most seasonably then are we invited in the example of holy Joshua, to learn what it is, to be truly brave in God's sight, and how people may train themselves to it. And that we might think the more of his example, take notice, my brethren, that this is he, who is set before us as the type of our Lord in His Office as Captain of our salvation, and Chief of all Christian warriors. His very name, as you know, is the Name of our Lord, Jesus; and in the New Testament it is written, Jesus. As their name is one, so their offices and callings are plainly alike; the one is a shadow of the other: Joshua led the people of God over Jordan to the promised land: Jesus Christ, our Fore-runner, takes us through Baptism into the kingdom of heaven. Joshua led the Israelites in their warfare, and subdued the seven nations under them: Christ, on our behalf, overthrows the enemies of our souls, and casts the wicked spirits out of us, beating down and destroying the whole body of sin. Joshua, having conquered Canaan, divided the land to the twelve tribes for an inheritance: our Lord, having conquered sin and death, ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and received gifts for men, the great unspeakable Gift, the Holy Ghost, in which all other gifts are included: Him, Jesus Christ sent down upon His Church, with all His good and gracious blessings, dividing to every man severally as He willeth: and thus, as I said, Christ fulfilled the figure of Joshua portioning out the holy land to the holy people.

But as Joshua was a type of Christ, so was he also a type and pattern of Christ's Church and of each

member of it, of each one of us in our measure. For we too have each one of us passed through the water into the kingdom of heaven. We too have, each one, our warfare to carry on with the Canaanites, the enemies of our souls; we are to meet them in the Name of our God and Saviour, to fight against them all the days of our life, to "follow upon them, and overtake them, and not turn again till we have destroyed them." So far we see that our work is like unto Joshua's. Outwardly indeed, and to the eye of sense, no two things could be more different: peaceful persons as we all are in this congregation, more than half of us women and children, having to get our bread and to do our part in the quiet offices of ordinary life: who would have dreamed of our having, each one of us, an office and calling like that of a great warrior? And yet so it is; the spiritual meaning of Scripture plainly teaches it. As Joshua then had need of courage, so hath each one of us: as the savage champions, the children of Anak, such as Goliath in after times, set themselves against Joshua and the children of Israel, so the evil spirits and the world and our own corrupt habits set themselves against our souls: and therefore the word which was spoken to Joshua was afterwards repeated by the Holy Ghost to us Christians, even to the feeblest, even to the most gentle; "Quit you like men, be strong, be strong and of a good courage: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Well, now then we are come back again to the question which I put just now. What is true courage? what is being truly brave in God's sight, after the example of Joshua? and we learn from God's own

mouth, that it consists not in merely being bold and fearless in war and other bodily perils: but "be thou strong," saith the Lord, "and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." Joshua's valour was not only shewn at the time of action by his not shrinking back from the enemy, nor losing his presence of mind when he found himself in danger, but it was shewn much more by his resolute and steadfast obedience to the Law and Will of God *at all times*, come what would of it: and such must be our courage also, if we would please God as Joshua did, and tread in the steps of Him, of Whom Joshua was but a shadow. We must not be contented with a certain natural coolness or daring, which may carry us with little or no fear, through seasons of bodily danger. What we must practise is *moral* courage, courage to bear being laughed at and thought ill of, for His sake Who for us was buffeted and crowned with thorns; courage to make good resolutions beforehand, and keep them when the time comes: courage to overcome your own inward weakness and dislike of trouble and hardship: courage to get up in the morning and set about your work at once: courage to persevere in that work, if you know it to be your duty, how untoward and unprosperous soever it may seem: courage to part with bad company, when your soul's good and faithfulness to God requires it, however pleasant the companion may be, and however much you may have depended on him in time past; courage to bear hardness in the way



of self-denial, as the New Testament teaches, and all the saints have practised : courage to break off what you are about, when a plain call of piety or charity interrupts it—your prayers for instance, or help needed by a poor or sick person : courage to speak unpleasant truths, and to bear cross and angry looks, when, being in any way trusted with people, you find that they need you to tell them of their faults. In these and a thousand like instances, one or other of them, we are called on to exercise Christian courage—moral courage, and not mere fearlessness in danger—every day, yea every hour of our lives. And the time, the season to which we are come in the Church's way of dividing the year, may put us particularly in mind of this. For now we are come to the end of the days ordained for the remembrance of the great things done and suffered for us. Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension-tide, Whitsuntide are over. All things are, in a way, done for us ; it only remains for each one to go in and possess the good land : and why do any of us linger and draw back ? Why, but for want of this true courage ? The healing waters are cold, and we will not plunge into them ; so we stand on the brink, shivering. Is it not so, my brethren ? Are there none among ourselves, who, in this or in other years, have with some real attention marked the meaning of the Church's great days, and so have come to know more than they did of the exceeding greatness of their own calling, and it has come strongly before their minds that they ought to make the venture which their Lord requires, and offer themselves to Him for the rest of their lives by the sacrifice of Holy Communion ; and they have

drawn back for fear of growing weary, or from apprehension of what people might say, or from shyness, or from dislike of strictness, or of trouble? Some fear, in short, other than the fear of God, has kept and is keeping them back from accepting His gracious call. And what can we say of them? Not less, surely, than this; that they are not yet "strong, nor of a good courage, to do all that the law of Christ their Saviour commandeth them." Far from *that*, they dare not even go on and take possession of the good land, even when the Lord hath brought them over the waters of Jordan. What is to become of them? Can they ever, continuing such, enter into the rest and portion of their Lord? Alas, they are wanting in the first requisite of a true soldier of Joshua: they are spiritual cowards: they want courage to enter on the good part, and once for all become followers of Him Who goeth on conquering and to conquer. But His word is, "If any man will serve Me, let him *follow* Me, and where I am, there shall also My servant be." "Let him *follow* Me: otherwise he never can be where I am." O my brethren, consider this.

But you may think perhaps in your heart, "Well, I know I am too weak, too fearful, too worldly: but what must I do? I cannot change my heart, and become brave out of cowardly at once." True, my brethren, you cannot change your own heart: but there is One at hand Who can and will change it, if you will in earnest apply to Him. Would you know how to apply to Him? Look again to Joshua's example, and as you have now learned from him what is that true Christian courage, in which you are so wanting, so now learn how you may be trained to



it, and gradually become, by God's help, brave and energetic, *morally* brave. See what Scripture tells us of Joshua's early training, and how it evidently tended to make him strong and very courageous in his duties to God. First, when quite a young man, he was with Moses on the mount: Moses took Joshua up as his minister, when he went up the first time to receive the Tables of the Law. Thus he must have known more of the awefulness of God's Presence than any one person besides, except it were Moses himself; and, being thus filled with the fear of the Lord, there was small room in his bosom for any other fear. And you too, brethren, you too have been with God in the mount: at least when He took you up in His arms and blessed you in Baptism; you were then brought inconceivably near to your Saviour, and so you were again, if you have been confirmed, at the moment of your Confirmation, when the Holy and Powerful Spirit came down upon you for this very purpose, to make you strong and courageous in fighting the battles of the Lord. Be very sure that, if you will remember these things in faith, if you will try to think of your Baptism and Confirmation, as the dutiful Israelites thought of their deliverance from Egypt; if you will make the most of any special opportunities afforded you for seeing God with your mind's eye; if when He gives you a good and deep thought, you will value it and attend to it, and turn it over in your heart, and pray that you may not let it go: you will be so far like Joshua, remembering Moses in the mount, and making much of the remembrance afterwards, all his life long.

Next we read, in what place Joshua spent a time

of trouble. Moses had to be much out, pleading with the rebellious people, and looking after them : but “ his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.” In like manner whoever would fain be a happy warrior, a true soldier of Christ, let him every day be alone with his God in prayer : let him be very diligent in going to Church, and very reverential and attentive while he is there. Let him persevere in these two things, thoughtful prayer, and reverential Church-going, and see whether the Holy Comforter will not open the windows of heaven, and give him a love that will make him strong and courageous.

And now if you would know, whether you are really improving in God Almighty’s school, learning this hard lesson of true Christian courage, here again the history of Joshua will help you : you may see whether or no you have his tokens. Joshua e.g. was very jealous for the honour of God and of Moses the messenger of God, and when he saw some who prophesied, apart from Moses, he was vexed and wanted Moses to stay them : and although in the particular instance he was mistaken, yet it was an honest and dutiful feeling ; and when you, like him, begin in a certain way, wherever you are, to keep God’s watch—to be hurt and mourn in secret for other men’s sins (of course never forgetting your own) when it is a real pain to you to see irreverence in God’s house or hear His Name taken in vain : then you too are in a way to that excellent grace and gift of Christian fortitude, and there is good hope that the Holy Ghost is making you strong and very courageous to keep all Christ’s law.

Bye and bye this spirit will be tried. It may be your duty, as it was Joshua's, to speak out and reprove with your lips some evil in your friends or companions which sorely vexes your heart. Joshua, you know, being one of the twelve who were sent to spy out the land, joined with Caleb only in reprov-  
ing the false report which the others agreed to bring of it: he would not follow the multitude to do evil, but, in faith and charity, pleaded the Lord's cause with them. Which of us all does not feel how good and noble, how truly courageous it was in him? Who does not wish and pray in his heart, that when he too shall come to be tried in like manner, God would grant him also to be strong and very courageous in standing out against the persuasions, the bad examples, the unholy taunts and jeerings of those who think themselves brave and high-spirited, because they have not learned to fear God and keep His commandments?

You all feel this, I know you do, when you give the matter a thought. You all know and feel that it is much better to be valiant on God's side than against Him. Well, lift up your heart and pray to God to settle and establish this good feeling in your souls. I speak unto you, especially young men: because, as the beloved disciple says, ye are strong, your time of life is the time of strength and courage, and the word of God as yet abideth in you; you have not as yet it may be hoped, driven away God's Spirit by deadly sin. Yet you, who by nature are bravest in earthly things, are in the things of God apt to be most weak and cowardly, shrinking from plain duties, and plunging into mortal sins, because you are afraid



of being laughed at, you have not the courage to make yourselves "particular." O let it be so no longer! Set out at once and follow your heavenly Joshua. He has brought you over Jordan; He is with you in the Holy Land; follow Him in faith in all His warfare with the Evil one; He will reward you with a goodly heritage, and protect you with the miracles of His grace. Only be strong and endure unto the end: remember that as Joshua began, so he ended: the last word of his, which we read, is "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

He is Almighty Who hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." So that if you are but on His side, you may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." Fear God in earnest, and you need fear none besides.



## SERMON V.

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### WORLDLY TOLERATION AND BROTHERLY LOVE.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 S. JOHN iii. 13.

*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."*

It may well seem strange at first hearing, how the world should come to hate the Gospel; to hate that which of all other things clearly does the most good, and encourages the kindest and most charitable conduct. It seems strange, I say, at first hearing, and when people have as yet no experience, that men should set themselves against such a doctrine. But when we come to know more of these two things, the world and the Gospel, we see most clearly that it is quite impossible they should ever truly and thoroughly agree.

For the world is like a spoiled and sickly child, wholly taken up with pleasing itself for the moment, and quite perverted in its taste and relish of things; putting continually evil for good and good for evil, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. The Gospel, on the other hand, is like a faithful physician, apply-

ing his remedies in due season, whether such remedies please the patient or no ; and very careful, if I may so speak, to look after his diet and daily habits ; continually denying him things which he most covets, and urging on him practices which are most irksome, and most contrary to his turn of mind. It is the patient's nature, the nature of us all, to be taken up with things present, and care little for things invisible ; but the physician, the Gospel, keeps calling on us day and night to remember that things invisible are all in all. Our disease is, to think well of ourselves, and to count it hard when we are bid to be in earnest, lowly and meek, and to depend entirely on Christ our Saviour. No wonder that we loathe such a remedy as the Gospel, of which the self-denying doctrines are the very sum and substance.

Then again, even a child, who considers at all what happened to our Lord, while He was among men, would be prepared to find the truth unpopular, and the world hating those who stand up for it. For as our Saviour Himself argued, "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you : if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." We hear the people with one voice, crying out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him ;" we see Him scourged, insulted, and hanged on a tree ; and this alone might well prepare us for what should happen to His Gospel afterwards. But He gave besides, and His Apostles added, many direct and express warnings. "They shall put you," He said, "out of

the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake: ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends." These warnings our Lord gave beforehand, in addition to the most plain and emphatical warning of His own bitter Cross, that His friends and followers might not be surprised and frightened, when they found their kind and amiable religion every where treated with scorn and hatred, and themselves in danger of being put to death with torments, because, like Him, and in obedience to His commands, they went about doing good.

And yet it is certain that at times our Saviour Himself was very much favoured by the people: more than once we read of the Scribes and Pharisees being afraid to lay hands on Him, because they feared the multitude; and every one knows how gloriously He made His last entry into Jerusalem, the same voices, which a few days afterwards were instant, requiring that He should be crucified, being then lifted up in Hosannas to the Son of David. And it was the same sort of thing with His Apostles after Him. Two or three times, after they were seized, their enemies were forced to let them go, because of their favour among all the people. Their miracles and their charities won them favour; but there was something in their doctrine, when fully understood, which forfeited that favour again.

Such as the way of the world was then, so it is now, and so it will be always. The sweet, and amiable, and useful spirit of the Gospel will always obtain for it a certain degree of favour; but further than



this, people will not go ; and when the *whole* Gospel, the *whole* counsel and will of God, is pressed upon them earnestly and without reserve, they will presently begin to be vexed and angry, and, as far as God's providence allows, will in some way or another contrive to persecute its teachers. For the *whole* Gospel of Jesus Christ, the *whole* counsel and message of God, is not only a kind and gentle, but it is also a strict self-denying law. It looks to people's good, not to their satisfaction : it cares not whether they are pleased or angry, provided the great end be accomplished, of leading them, practically, and in earnest, to care for their souls, and love God's truth, and amend their ways accordingly. It is as absurd to expect such a message to be generally popular, as if a physician were to expect that his patients should generally like the medicines he gives them.

The more we know of the history of the Gospel, the more we shall be confirmed in these notions. Observe what treatment the Church met with at the hands of the unbelieving Jews ; how they proved, first, crucifiers of our Lord, and afterwards murderers of S. Stephen and persecutors of S. Paul ; and observe the cause of their being such. It was, that the great notions they had formed, of being rich and mighty in the present world, were all to be thrown by at once, and poverty, patience, humility, practised in their place. This was the true cause of Jewish unbelief ; as our Saviour shewed clearly enough in His parable of the wicked husbandman, who refused to pay the rent of the vineyard. When they saw the Master's Son coming Himself to demand the rent, they said, "Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance



shall be ours." That is, they put our Lord to death, in order that His meek and self-denying kingdom being at an end, their own proud and worldly kingdom, which they were always dreaming of, might be set up and flourish, and they be noble and powerful in it.

Thus Christianity was unpopular with the Jews, and for reasons not much unlike these it was unpopular among the Gentiles also. Their religion, which they had from their fathers, was a proud, easy, sensual thing. They might practise it, and yet be full of impurity; as proud, as covetous, as godless as they pleased. If they just offered up now and then a sacrifice, with a sort of prayer, all, they thought, would go right enough between them and such gods as they served. Therefore, although they as well as others perceived the beauty of Christ's holy Faith, when it was made known to them at first, they soon came to dislike it, and call it unkind and mischievous, when they found how strict it was in forbidding the worship of their false gods: they said it was turning the world upside down, and that they who belonged to it were no better than troublers and enemies to God and man.

Well, this went on for a long while, and bitter persecution the Church endured at the hands of the heathen Roman Emperors for nearly three hundred years. Then at last the truth so far prevailed, that outwardly the great ones of the world became Christians; but did the Church and the world therefore agree? did the kingdom of darkness cease to persecute? Far from it: the struggle and the persecution only took a new form. It was not now heathens

contending with Christians, but it was false Christs and false prophets contending with the true. There crept in persons, whose pride and self-will could not endure to submit themselves to truths so humbling as the doctrine of the Cross : Christ, the Son of God, and very God, made Man and crucified for our sins, was to them a stumbling-block and foolishness : they would own Him to be an Angel, or a good man, but not as Very and Eternal God. And a thousand crafty ways they invented ; men of the world, and men of false science, joining together in a remarkable way, to seem Christians and yet please themselves. This warfare within the Church has continued ever since in various forms, according as the Evil spirit, either overruled by God's secret providence, or left to his own crafty devices, thought proper to try one way or another. At present, the great point on which the servants and the enemies of Christ seem to be most directly opposing each other, is whether the Church should be respected or no. I do not mean the Clergy merely, nor the Christians of this or that country, but I mean here by the word Church the great body of Christian people in all countries, who have been in communion with Jesus Christ, through His Apostles and their successors the Bishops, quite down from His time until now ; and I say that the great point, on which now the world is parting off, as it were, into two sects or opinions, is, whether this Holy Catholic Church should be obeyed and respected or no ; whether each man is to be a Church, nay, a kind of God to himself, or whether he is meekly to submit himself to the Apostolical Church in all things.

This is the great question, in answering which the spirit of the world says one thing, and the Spirit of Christ and His disciples says another thing. The spirit of the world says, "Be free : assert your own rights and liberties : submit to nothing that you yourself do not plainly understand and approve." But the Spirit of the Gospel says, "Blessed are the meek, the poor in spirit, those who submit to persecution and reproach."

The spirit of this present time says, "Above all things, do not let yourself be imposed upon : do not be led or guided by any one in Church or state, though they can bring the plainest proofs that our Lord Himself set them over you." This temper, now more and more encouraged, seems very like what S. Paul has prophesied of the Man of Sin, who should arise in the latter days, and "exalt himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped : " each man thus setting himself to be as it were self-sufficient, and a kind of God unto himself.

But whether or no this be indeed part of the meaning of that awful prophecy, one cannot doubt that wilfulness and self-sufficiency is opposed to the temper of the true Faith, and inclines men to hate true believers ; and thus, most likely, to the very end of the world, the struggle will go on between the world and the Church,—that great struggle, of which our Lord has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."

"Marvel not, therefore," Christians, says the Apostle, "if the world hate you," as Christians. If it did not hate you, it would have ceased to be the



world; it would have become really Christian itself, and would no longer lie in wickedness. For this, says he, is one of the surest signs whereby we may try and know ourselves, whether "we have passed from death unto life;" namely, our loving, or not loving "the brethren." By which expression, of loving the brethren, S. John does not seem here to mean the same thing as loving our neighbour generally, but rather loving Christians as such, they being our brethren not only in blood but in faith, new-born with the same holy Baptism, and fed with the same Divine food, the Body and Blood of the Son of God. The Apostle seems to tell us, that if we really love a person for being in that holy company, if our hearts own him indeed as a brother, and if we behave towards him as such, consistently, it is one of the best signs we can give of our having passed from death unto life. The same thought appears to have been in David's mind, when he was reckoning the signs of one fit to dwell in God's tabernacle, and to "rest upon His holy hill;" that is, the signs of a worthy member of the Church. Among the rest comes in this: "He maketh much of them that fear the Lord." He does not go by the world's partialities; high place, and cleverness, and beauty, and riches, and cheerful spirits, and mere good-nature, and other such things, which naturally make men's company desirable to one another; these are not enough to cause a good Christian of course to make much of him who has them: but whether with or without any of these, if you "make much of them that fear the Lord," if you steadily and regularly prefer and cherish those who shew by their life and conduct that they are on



God's side and not against Him, then you give a good sign that you are yourself on God's side.

It stands by reason, that as you choose your friends and associates from God's friends, so you will be careful to avoid unnecessary communication with His enemies. However agreeable and useful, in a worldly way, may be the company of bad people or enemies to the truth, a thorough loyal subject of Christ's Church will not enter into it, except with care and reserve. He will remember that the Spirit, by S. Paul, has confirmed the proverb, which common sense taught the heathens, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." He will remember what the Psalmist says of the sort of character which it becomes the faithful to avoid: "Do not I hate them O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with them that rise up against Thee? yea, I hate them right sore, even as though they were mine enemies." Not meaning that he literally hated them, but that he disliked their company, and kept them at a distance, that he might not be partaker of other men's sins. He had no enemies but the enemies of God.

By this we see that a kind of reserve, a prudent way of keeping our distance, while the ungodly are in our sight, is very likely to please God far better than that cool undistinguishing good-nature which the men of our times so much approve; which makes no difference between one man and another, either as to his faith, or as to many points of his practice.

There cannot be a plainer instance than this of the complete opposition which there is between the spirit of the world and the Christian spirit. "Charity,"

says the world, "and liberality, and toleration, are all in all. Make no difference between man and man on account of their differences of opinion towards God, and then you are as much in the right as man can be." Such is the temper of our times; but what say the oracles of God? "If any man come unto you, and bring not the true Christian doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." And again, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences among you, and avoid them." Every one sees at once how ill these texts suit with that universal liberality which is so much approved in our days.

Nor let it be supposed that there is any want of charity in making some difference in your behaviour to persons, and treating them with some reserve, because they are enemies to the Church, or in any other way going morally wrong. It is easy to behave so to them as that they may know you do not avoid them out of unkindness, but out of real care for them, to give the most effectual warning you can; not accounting them as enemies, but admonishing them as brethren. Only let us be very careful that we do not suppose ourselves friends to God's Church, when we are only indulging perhaps our own fancy, our liking or dislike. And perhaps there can be no surer sign of men's not being wrong in this matter, than if they are pleased with every thing else which brings them near Almighty God. If we honour and love His holy Word, His Sacraments, His Church, and His Ministers as such; if we make it our daily and hourly endeavour to live in com-

munion with Him according to His own appointed way ; finally, if we take every opportunity of doing what good we can ; if we try, by patience and well-doing, to win over those who are not yet altogether brethren in the Faith ; then may we hope that we are in earnest, that we do indeed “love the brethren,” and that we have by God’s grace “passed from death unto life.”

## SERMON VI.

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### THE SIN AND FOLLY OF ENVYING SINNERS.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PROV. xxiii. 17.

*“Let not thine heart envy sinners : but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”*

How is it that so many of us go on from year to year, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, and from Trinity Sunday to Advent again, keeping Christmas and Easter and Whitsuntide, waiting outwardly on Church services, and hearing the round of the Church's holy lessons ; and yet after all we seem to be nothing bettered, but rather to grow worse ? How is it that we spend so much time in the garden of the Lord, and carry away with us little or nothing of its fragrance ?

I told you one reason of this, last Sunday. I spoke of our carnal fear and irresolution, how far we fall short of what is commanded ; “Be ye strong and very courageous,” when we go forth to fight the battles of the Lord against the world, the flesh and the devil. And I shewed you out of Holy Scripture the example of the blessed Joshua, as one, of whom you might



learn so to fear God as to fear none besides Him. For that is true Christian courage: that is being valiant after a godly manner. And it is the want of this, in very many cases, which spoils all our good beginnings.

But now there is another sad circumstance, which no one who looks carefully around him can help noticing. It is that, of which the Spirit of God, speaking by the wisest of men, warns us in the text: "Let not thine heart envy sinners." When you know, at the bottom of your heart, that such and such a course of behaviour is wrong, do not allow yourself to indulge in any kind of longing imagination concerning it: wondering what sort of thing it may be: what satisfactions it may bring with it: wishing it were not forbidden by the Almighty: and enquiring and calculating, how far one may go towards it and yet be pardoned. All such are most dangerous thoughts; they are fiery darts of the devil, which must be quenched at once; for if we allow them to kindle on us, it will too likely prove a fire that will never go out. And the Evil one knows too well, how to set us on such wicked thoughts, by putting sinners in our way and teaching us to envy them. Consider, a moment, and you will plainly see what I mean: for it is an ordinary thing; there are examples of it in all times of a man's life; the youthful, the middle-aged, the old, are all liable to it.

Take the case first of a young person, a boy or a girl, beginning to grow up and look around them, and see what others are about. Alas! even of such, oftentimes, the fearful word of Scripture may be very very early spoken: "The mystery of iniquity

doth already work" in them: they begin to fall grievously from baptismal grace; and this is the sad miserable process which takes place in them. They see others of their own age or a little older, winning, perhaps, and agreeable companions, very good-natured, very cheerful, very much admired and sought after; but unhappily entered already in the devil's school, more or less skilful in the knowledge and practice of the abominable things which God hates; such as profane irreverent speech; filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, which are most unfit for a Christian: cleverness in lying, in stealing, in deceiving, in flattering, in evil-speaking, in having their own way, right or wrong; in sinful liberties of all kinds. Too often, I say, may we perceive young persons rather admiring these and other wrong ways, looking wistfully after them, half-wishing that themselves had the courage to do them: eagerly reading everything of the sort which meets their eye in books or in newspapers, and proud of knowing the wicked world as well or better than their companions. What is this, but allowing their heart to envy sinners? What is it but feeding wicked fancies, too sure to end, before long, in the worst of words and deeds? But it is very very common: and fearfully does it work, in spoiling the hope of good fruit in those, who have been early planted in the courts of the Lord. What could He have done more for them, than to plant them in His Vineyard the Church, and nourish and water them with her blessed teaching and Sacraments? And now, when He looketh that they should bring forth grapes, behold they bring forth nothing but wild grapes; simply because they give way to the

temptation of desiring to be like those who are more knowing and more daring than themselves, without care whether it be for good or for evil.

This is the way, in which *young* persons permit their hearts to envy sinners, and wander from their baptismal innocency. And often and often, when men have grown older and are become keen in any pursuit, they learn to be unscrupulous, by watching those who are bolder and more successful than themselves: especially in the gathering of money or of worldly consequence. Once set your heart upon laying up treasures on earth, and you will soon find yourself envying every one who is raising himself in the world faster than you can, it may be by oppressive and unjust ways; your heart will grow as hard as Pharaoh's and you will be eager to try every way of making a profit out of your fellow-creatures, not regarding what they may suffer. To such the wise man speaks in another place: "<sup>a</sup> Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." One would think, none could envy such a one as Pharaoh, or choose the ways that lead to an end like his: yet this is in truth the case of worldly men, as they grow older in their worldliness.

And bye and bye, when they come to absolute old age, their condition is still more sorrowful: they go on (alas that we should so often witness it!) sullenly repining that they have not been so knowing and so prosperous as some others in the ways of the world: they wish they could live their life over again, not that they might live it better and more religiously in God's sight, but that they might be a little better

<sup>a</sup> Prov. iii. 31.



off, a little richer, a little more comfortable, now they are going to die. A melancholy condition indeed! to go down into the grave, a sort of martyr to the devil! having neither the promise of this life, nor of that which is to come! Yet it is the condition which thou art choosing for thyself, whoever thou art, who in thy youth exercisest thyself in envying sinners, as if it were a creditable and pleasant thing to be skilful in ill-doing.

Holy Scripture is full of warnings against this fatal kind of envy: for indeed in this form came the first temptation to our mother Eve. Why did she look towards the fatal tree, and reach out her hand; and touch the fruit, and take it, and taste it, but because the tempter had contrived to put it into her weak and foolish heart, that by so doing she would become as a god: that is, as an angel, as the tempter himself; knowing not good only (*that*, he contrived to make her feel an ordinary, dull, mean-spirited thing): but “the gods,” he told her, namely the fallen angels, such as he was himself, *they* “know *evil* as well as *good*: would you not wish to be like them?” This was the temptation; and it was too mighty for Eve: she fell, and all we after her. Such is the result of letting one’s “heart envy sinners.”

But Scripture gives another instance, almost as great, almost as near to us, as that of Eve. The Israelites, whether in the desert or in Canaan, God’s chosen and favoured people, what was it that ruined them? Surely nothing but this wretched fancy, that they would fain do, as other men did. They saw the idols of the heathen around them, first in Egypt, afterwards in Canaan; they longed after the volup-



tuous feasts; they said in their hearts, “<sup>b</sup> We will be as the heathen, the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.” This was their low, base, sinful desire: and God in His anger permitted them to have their own way. What was the calf in Horeb, and all the plagues, with which they were visited on account of it, but the sad fruit of their envying sinners in their heart? They wished themselves again in Egypt, among the idolaters, free to riot in luxury and excess, and thought the poor ignorant heathen happy, who had no knowledge of the true God, to check them in their gross satisfactions. And it was just the same, when they found themselves in Canaan. They looked round and saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering; i. e. wherever the idolaters were used to offer. Thus they shewed their envy of sinners, and chose all the ways of the heathen: they enquired after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.” The very sound of the words may remind us of the bold and reckless sayings of ungodly young people, as soon as they have once given themselves over to the thirst of evil and corrupting knowledge. Holy Scripture could hardly say more against our envying sinners in our heart, than that by *it* came the fall of man, and by *it* the captivity and ruin of the Jewish people.

God’s Holy Spirit, thus proclaiming the mischief, in His love proclaims also the remedy. A very simple one it is, and easy to understand, but oh, how

<sup>b</sup> Ezek. xx. 32.

hard, how impossible, for sinful man to put in practice, without the heavenly assistance of the same Spirit ! The way not to let one's "heart envy sinners" is, to "be in the fear of the Lord all day long:" to keep up a regular, habitual serious sense that God is here, the great and good God ; to turn towards Him instinctively in all temptations, as children in trouble run for shelter to their parents. In order to be able to do this, we must force ourselves to recollect very often that He is present ; as truly so at all other times, as when we are on our knees in prayer. One who in earnest has this in his mind cannot possibly envy sinners. How can he envy those, whom he knoweth to be direct and immediate objects of God's eternal wrath, and to be, even now, sealed for ruin unless they repent ? You might as well suppose a miserly man envying his neighbours for having gathered immense riches into some place which he knew was shortly to be burned down. Consider the end, and "c fret not thyself because of the ungodly : neither be thou envious against the evil doers." Why ? Because "he <sup>d</sup> shall soon be cut down like the grass : and be withered even as the green herb : " because "e there shall be no reward to the evil man : the candle of the wicked shall be put out ! " When thou art disposed to repine at the greater prosperity of some wicked person, when the thought comes into thy mind, "What if I were to do as he doeth ? at any rate it would be present success, and I might live to undo the mischief by true repentance," I beseech you, set aside the wicked imagination at once, by drawing a picture in your mind's eye of the Judge sitting on

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 1.<sup>d</sup> Ib. 2.<sup>e</sup> Prov. xxiv. 20.

His Throne, yourself and the person you envy standing before Him : listen with your inward ear to His Voice, commanding those wicked away from Him, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The sinner will be no object of your envy in that moment, however prosperous he may have been on earth. You will know then, how charitable it was to teach you beforehand, that the knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom. Oh, do not you refuse to learn the lesson ; do not out of a mere childish curiosity look after forbidden things ; do not, being warned, put yourself in a way to be ruined, with the sinners whom you are tempted to envy, and with the devil who instils the envy into your heart. What is there in a bad word, that young Christians should take pride and pleasure in learning it of those who are a little older ? Are there not in God's creation abundance of pure and innocent enjoyments for young and old, that they must needs go out of their way to amuse themselves with learning wickedness ? There is water enough to drink : why should stolen waters be sweeter ? There is bread to eat, by God's blessing on honest labour : why should it be pleasanter to steal it, or earn it by forbidden ways, that you may have to eat it in secret, in shame and fear, before God Who will bye and bye judge you ?

But we are so inconceivably weak, that we are almost sure to forget all these things, and begin to wish ourselves like the wicked, if we willingly abide in their company. Therefore doth the wise man especially caution us, if we would not be "envious towards evil men," that we must not "desire to be with them." It is a plain command to understand, though



sometimes hard to keep, and if there were no other reason for young persons being very careful never to omit their prayers, this surely would be reason enough, that they need the grace of God daily, to keep them from choosing wicked companions; or where they have no choice, to keep them from taking harm by the bad neighbourhood. Watch and pray against this temptation especially: if you do so, depend on it, your good Lord will not leave you alone. The good company of Him and His blessed Angels will prevail more to sanctify and bless you, than the evil presence of Satan and the children of Satan, to unhallow and corrupt.

And there is another thing which the Holy Ghost clearly intends, when He is warning us against “envying sinners.” As on the one hand we are never to wish ourselves like them (God forbid!) so on the other hand we are to restrain even our virtuous dislike of their ways from making us altogether fretful and discontented: fretful towards God, Who in His unsearchable Wisdom does not interfere to prevent such things, or discontented with the world and our own providential place in it. “Fret not thyself against the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil doers.” Nay, how *can* you envy those, of whom you know for certain, that they shall “soon be cut down and withered even as the green herb?” Surely they are objects of compassion, not of envy, therefore “fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his ways, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” And in another Psalm we read how even a good man “was



grieved at the wicked, when he saw the ungodly in so great prosperity." He "had almost said even as they." And so it is in all our lines of life: it staggers even persons well brought up, when they allow themselves to look with a sort of admiration on the seemingly happy and cheerful lives, which irreligious and worldly men are leading. At first they are shocked and discontented, and if they do not at once go into the sanctuary of God, if they do not remind themselves of what the Bible teaches concerning "the end of these men," they will very likely go on to say to themselves, What if they should be right after all? What if I were to allow myself some of the liberties, which they appear so to enjoy? Therefore I say to you, my brethren; the Word of God in effect says to you; Do not get into a way of admiring such persons at all, remember the end, for "surely there will be an end, and thine expectation (what God bids thee wait for) shall not be cut off." Remember the end of these men: then you will leave off envying them, and you will begin to pity them and pray for them.

Finally, may we all pray and strive to have such a deep and true sense of our own manifold sin and infirmity, that we may be even ashamed to wish for what we see others enjoying, since we have so much reason to fear we should make a worse use of it than they. If we were truly humble, we could not envy; least of all could we envy sinners.

By rules such as these, my brethren, may a Christian, through the Holy Ghost, keep himself pure and steady in childhood and in youth, meek, resigned, and thankful in age. Whatever is brought upon him, he will take cheerfully, and will be patient

when he is changed to a low estate. In all discomfort, loneliness, perplexity, ill-usage, he will betake himself to his Church and his Bible: and the two thoughts of his own sin and his Saviour's Goodness will ever appear to him such great thoughts, that he will have no room left in his heart for envying sinners or fretting against them. Such persons are very precious, and when they are taken away to their rest, they leave a sort of gap, which it will take a long time to supply: and let me tell you, my brethren, they leave also upon all who knew them a deep obligation to be the better for their acquaintance: the nearer to God, for having witnessed their holy and believing ways. Such an one, I verily believe, we are to lay in the grave this day. God give us grace to follow his devout patience! But if we will not learn in that school: if we will still go on envying sinners: and choosing their ways, there is no doubt whom we shall be really following, and there are fearful sayings in Holy Writ, concerning the end of such a course. God preserve us from it! God keep us from being of the number of those, of whom it is written, that they, “<sup>f</sup> knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them!”

<sup>f</sup> Rom. i. 32.

## SERMON VII.

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GOD THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE;  
THE CHURCH'S GUIDANCE ITS LIMIT.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JUDGES iv. 8.

*“If thou wilt go with me, then I will go : but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.”*

LAST Sunday the Church set before us an eminent example of Christian courage, in the history of holy Joshua. This week we are led on to the history of Deborah and Barak, which, besides being, like Joshua's, a great encouragement to all not to shrink back, nor “mind trifles,” as the saying is, in the cause of Christ and His Church ; reminds us also how, all along, we are to take care to go by the rules which He hath set us. According to the Collect which we so often use, we must see to it that all our works be begun, continued, and ended in Christ : that we take Christ crucified, risen and ascended, yet still present by His Spirit with His Church on earth, that we take Him, I say, along with us in the commencement of all our serious undertakings ; refer to Him continually, whilst we are going on ;



and in the end submit all to His holy will and pleasure, giving Him all the glory of whatever good there may have been done, and taking to ourselves the shame of whatever may have been evil : as Barak began by seeking to have Deborah for his companion in the great work which he was called on to do ; went on receiving counsel from her to the very moment of the battle ; and with her sang his song of praise unto the Lord, giving Him all the glory of the victory. It is not simply valour and courage, of which this history sets us a pattern, but of courage ordered all along by a very loyal and dutiful heart.

It may be well to go shortly over the chief points in the history. The Jews, having now been for some generations in the Holy Land, had repeatedly fallen away, as was foretold. Moses had said (among some of his last words) “<sup>a</sup> I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord.” And all through their history, from the beginning of the book of Judges to the end of the second book of Chronicles, we see too plainly and sorrowfully, how all this was fulfilled. From beginning to end it is rebellion and punishment, then short repentance, then rebellion and punishment again : too much like our own lives, as the more part of us, to be sure, must sadly confess. So it had come to be in the days of Deborah and Barak, God had sold His people, for their sin, into the hand of a very cruel king of the Canaanites, Jabin : and he had a captain named

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xxxi. 29.



Sisera who had <sup>b</sup> 900 chariots of iron ; and twenty years “he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” This is their condition : they are in slavery ; they have been so for so many years, that to many of them slavery has come to appear their natural condition. But now the Lord, according to His rule of raising up the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and the foolish to confound the wise, and the despised to confound the honourable ; God, I say, according to this rule, raises up a woman to be their deliverer : “ Deborah a prophetess, judged Israel at that time.” The wise men, the Priests, and the warriors, were in a manner passed over, and the Spirit of God came upon this Deborah, and she prophesied. God gave her His holy inspiration to order His people in their distress, and tell them how to do for the best, at a time when the ordinary ways and ministrations of justice were at a stand : and the children of Israel came up to her for judgement. This must have been an exceeding help and comfort to as many as were at all well disposed, a private token to them that they were not quite forsaken. But, after a while, God vouchsafed to manifest Himself openly and publicly by this His servant Deborah. At His inspiration she sent a message to Barak, to gather 10,000 men to Mount Tabor, the mountain on which afterwards our Lord was transfigured : and the men were to be from the two tribes of Naphtali and of Zebulon, the two tribes, among which our Lord first began to preach publicly, and out of which He chose the greater number of His twelve Apostles. When the army should be so gathered, Deborah declares

<sup>b</sup> Judges iv. 3. -

to Barak by the word of the Lord, that Sisera with his army will put himself in the way to fight with him, and that the Lord will deliver the enemy into his hands; and there should be a great victory, a great deliverance for Israel. Observe now, how Barak receives her orders. “<sup>c</sup> If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” In his dutiful and trustful love he will meet any enemy, how strong soever: nine hundred chariots of iron are nothing to him, so long as he has with him the chosen messenger of God, the Prophetess in whom abideth the Spirit of God: but if *she* be not there, if the tokens of God’s special Presence be wanting, then he durst not stir a step. What is this, but a hint to all Christians to do nothing without the Church, to draw back from nothing when they have the Church clearly with them. “<sup>d</sup> If thou wilt go with me, then will I go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” And this, because the Church in all times is what Deborah was in her time, the chosen and appointed Prophet of God and what thing soever is taught and commanded by the Church, the whole Church from the beginning, is taught and commanded by Jesus Christ according to His own saying, “<sup>e</sup> I am with you always *even* unto the end of the world.” And so, as long as we are with the Church, we are with Christ: and when men separate from the Church they separate from Christ: and then how can they expect to prevail against the powers of evil?

But in order to abide with Christ in His Church we must deny ourselves, we must not seek our own

<sup>c</sup> Judges iv. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Ib.

<sup>e</sup> S. Matt. xxviii. 20.

glory. This is signified by Deborah's reply to Barak<sup>f</sup>: "I will surely go with thee: nevertheless the journey which thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." As much as to say, that when Christ and His Church go with us, when we are working under Him, we must lay aside all thoughts of ourselves, we must understand that our sanctification and salvation is of the Lord, through Him Who is meek and lowly, and under Him by such meek and lowly instruments as it shall please Him to employ: not at all of ourselves. So Barak was told, and so he believed: he knew beforehand that the journey he was taking would not be for his own honour, but that the Lord would sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. He probably thought of Deborah herself, when he heard that prophecy: but the history shews that it was fulfilled in the person of Jael, when God's providence guided Sisera to her tent, and moved her to slay him as she did: wherein she was a type and figure of the holy Church, the mother of us all, overcoming and slaying God's enemy, sin, not by the might of this world, but by a nail, as it were, taken from the Cross of Christ: by lowliness, patience, charity, and prayer. Barak, in gladly consenting to what Deborah said, and in going on to do his best, though the glory would not be his own, what was he but a figure and type of a dutiful and devout Christian, obediently working on in the way of God's commandments, fighting the battles of the Lord against the Evil one, all the while with a deep feeling that he is but an unprofitable servant, and that, had he

<sup>f</sup> Judges iv. 9.



done all, he must still owe his salvation and every good thing to the free unmerited mercy of his suffering Saviour? And so we find that afterwards, when the fight was over, and the great victory finally won, Barak joined with all his heart in praising God for the work, which others had done and the blessing which others had won. He was the very pattern of a true and loyal soldier, not caring who did his king service, so that the service was but done.

Herein Barak shewed, as I suppose, a true Apostolic spirit, for this was the very charity of the holy Apostles. God's glory and the salvation of souls was in such sort next their heart, that they cared little in comparison, *who* did the work, *whom* their Master employed in it. So speaks one of them, a true Barak, to his children in Christ Jesus "Whether it were I or the other Apostles, so we preach and so ye believed, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, all are yours." The one thing to be looked after is, that ye might be saved, whether by our preaching or another's it matters not. This was the Apostles' spirit, the mind of S. Peter and S. Paul: it was the same spirit which shewed itself in Barak: who himself, you may observe, was of the Apostolic tribe, the tribe of Naphtali. I call Naphtali the Apostolical tribe, because we know most of our Lord's twelve Apostles probably were of that tribe or of the neighbouring tribe of Zebulon: for there our Lord first began to call the labourers into His vineyard: as the Prophets had foretold: "§ the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthali, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which

§ S. Matt. iv. 15, 16.



sat in darkness saw great light ; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." And Jacob in his prophetic blessing before his death described Nephtali as "giving goodly words," the gracious words of the Gospel, given out into all the world by the Apostles and Evangelists. Barak then, being, as I said, one of this Apostolical tribe, was also a pattern of Apostolical self-denying faith : and as such is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews among the other worthies of Israel. "<sup>h</sup> The time would fail me were I to tell you of Gideon, and of Barak, of Samson, and of Jephthah ; of David also, and Solomon and of the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Why is Barak so mentioned among the great men of old ? Surely for the reason pointed out in the text, for his great and single-hearted loyalty in the cause of his God. Barak's faith was shewn in two things : wherever the Lord by His chosen servant was with him, he would go : where the Lord would not be his companion, there he would not go. This then is what we are to learn of him, first that, according to the prayer of good Bishop Wilson, which, no doubt, many are familiar with, we should never undertake any work, which we dare not beg God to prosper. We should go nowhere, set about nothing, without taking God along with us. Now, God will not be with us, except we be careful, at setting out, not to enter on any way which He has forbidden, and all along to resort to Him by prayer. See then, my brethren, in any thing which you are invited to un-

<sup>h</sup> Heb. xi. 32—34.

dertake, that it be such as neither to lead you to mischief, nor to keep you from prayer. Let us see to it again, that when our Lord and Master and Owner, He who bought us at so dear a Price to be His own: when He sets a task, we should at once devote ourselves to it, just because it is He Who sets it: and should go on with it just as earnestly, not damped in our zeal, not flinching at all from our work, whether we are to have the credit and comfort of seeming to succeed in our work or no. There is a saying related of a holy man of old, a famous preacher in his time, and one who was supposed to have great power in converting souls to God, I mean the holy S. Bernard, that the devil once tempted him to leave off preaching, under the pretence that his success would make him proud: but the holy man answered the Evil one and said, "I neither began for thee, nor for thee will I make an end." And no doubt had the temptation been the other way, as it might be to many of us, were the devil to try and persuade a man to neglect the work, to which God had called him, on the ground that he had no success; he might as well let it alone; a conscientious person might give him the like answer: "I neither began for thee, nor for thee will I leave off." You are a parent, we will suppose, and you have tried many ways of keeping your children in order, and as yet it all seems vain: the children go on rebelliously, and seem to be living without God in the world. Are you therefore to give them up, to leave off warning and contriving and praying for them? God forbid! you must go on casting your bread upon the waters; there is a promise that you shall find it after many

days. How knowest thou, O father or mother, whether this very next prayer of yours for your child, or this present remonstrance with him, which something tempts you to give up, may not be, in the counsels of God, the very prayer, the very word of warning, which is to turn him, and put him in the way of salvation? The only safe way both for him and for yourself is that you should go on working and praying, praying and working for Christ's sake, whether men praise you or no, whether or no you have the comfort in your work, which you might reasonably wish to have. What are all these and a thousand more such encouragements, in comparison of the one great and firm purpose, deeply fixed in the bottom of a man's heart, to go with the Lord wherever He summons you, and never to go where He has not promised to be: to measure all men and all things by this one rule, are they such as to please Christ or to displease Him? and lastly to obey, without shrinking or flinching, whatever He clearly commands you, though it may sometimes seem to do violence to your human reason or human feeling. O may we all be more perfect for the future, than ever we have been as yet, in this great duty of taking God always with us, and following on wheresoever He shall lead us. Those especially, who in any way have within a short time given in their names to God, as in Confirmation, in first Communion, in vows offered by way of thanksgiving for special mercies, I say to all such, and to all my brethren in Christ; lift up your hearts; do not mind trifles: follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, to please Him and save your souls, not for any earthly reason.

So shall you have your part (O blessed hope!) in that great reward which the prophetic word holds out to His servants, in the end. While Christ's enemies perish, all of them; they that love Him shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. Or as another prophet sings, "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the sun, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."



## SERMON VIII.

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### SYMPATHY WITH SAINTS AND MARTYRS.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

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1 S. PET. v. 9.

*“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*

WHEN people are sick and in bad pain, we know how apt they are to imagine, Surely never any one was so afflicted as I am. How often do we hear them say, they are sure no person living can have a notion of what they suffer: no tongue, they are certain, can tell, no thought imagine it. Yet all the while, physicians and nurses, and those about them, who are experienced in sickness, can tell them a good deal about their own feelings. When they see their patients cast down with the notion of there being something new and strange in their trial, something worse than others have to bear, they would tell them, “You are not the first that have had these feelings, neither do we expect you to be the last. It is no new nor very strange case. Such and such persons have been ill in the same way, and have recovered: they all complained, more or less, in the same way as you do:

they all know how to pity you, and so do those who have waited on them, and have been much with them in their sickness."

Like to this comfort which sick men receive, in the distressing thought, that no one was ever ill as they are, is the comfort which the holy Apostle here offers to the souls of sinful men in temptation and distress. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." As if he had said, "I am not ignorant how you feel, when temptations and trials come upon you. I know it comes over your mind continually, Surely no one ever was tempted exactly as I am; surely my trials and burthens are more intolerable than men commonly endure." When the persecution of the heathen comes on, then, S. Peter seems to say, then each one of you will be inclined to think his own share in it worse than that of all others. With that imagination, the devil would slacken your resistance, would make you less hearty and earnest in standing firm against all that he can do. He goeth about the fold, like a roaring lion prowling about, seeking whom he may devour, which of the lambs he may find straying. But be not you moved by him; set your faces steadily against him, knowing that the same trouble, or quite as bad, has to be endured by your brethren, scattered, as you are, among the heathen. Other Christians in other places will be persecuted as well as you. They will be comforted in thinking of you, as you may be in thinking of them.

You are not alone in the world. Christ's Body every where, in its distressed members, feels for you and with you. They all fear and grieve in your fear and grief: all rejoice with you when the Almighty grants you relief. Therefore be of good courage: that which is the portion of all God's saints and servants ought not to seem hard to you. It is what He gives to those whom He loves best: you should account it a token of His love, and so make it welcome, hard as it may be for flesh and blood to bear.

Thus S. Peter encourages his suffering brethren, when a time of trouble was coming on; much as S. Paul had before encouraged the Corinthians. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man:" nothing that is beyond human strength, assisted by the grace of the Holy Ghost, to bear. "For God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, make also a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God, as the saying is, suits the shoulder to the burden. If He lays any part of His Son's Cross upon you, you know that He has united you to that Son, has made you a member of Him, that by His strength you might endure what you never could endure by yourself.

This is the answer to those who think the commandments of the Gospel too strict, too pure to be obeyed. They hear it said, thou shalt not trust in riches, thou shalt take the lowest room, thou shalt not look on a woman to lust after her, and other such sayings they hear; and they turn a deaf ear to them, making up their minds that such commands cannot be obeyed; as if all that Christ meant by them was



to humble us, and make us run for shelter to His pardoning grace. But, surely, this is very unbelieving ; since God has promised His Holy Spirit to help us against these very temptations. God offers us a way to escape : is it not then our own fault if we are caught ?

And to encourage us still more, He shews us, as here in the text, the example of our brethren that are in the world. He seems to say, “ Look at My promise : look at the plain words of the Bible, ‘ Your Father which is in heaven, will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.’ And if that be not enough, look at the lives of My saints : look and see how good and penitent persons, from time to time, have really been helped to keep these commands, which you think too hard, and to resist these temptations, which you think too strong. Think of your brethren that are in the world, how they have the same afflictions to endure, and are not overcome. The same helps which are offered to them, are offered to you. The same hand which upholds them, is stretched out to you. ‘ Only do you lay hold of it, and keep your hold.’ ”

On the other hand, the evil spirit, that roaring lion, who is ever seeking whom he may devour, he will be busy encouraging in you just the contrary of these good thoughts. If you are in trouble and distress, he will try to make you feel as if no other person was ever in so bad a condition ; as if it was really too much for human patience : for he knows that he will have his own way with you, if he can once get you to go on in unbelief and repining. If he can, he will persuade you that all or a great part



of your trouble arises from such and such a person's ill-usage, and so he will make you spiteful and envious ; or a rebel, perhaps, and a hater of those who are set over you. Other persons, who are not so ill-used, may do well to be forgiving and meek : but your case, he will whisper, is really too hard, too bad. Irreligious, ill-disposed people, taught by him, will say to you, as trouble after trouble comes on, what Job's wife said to Job, " Dost thou still retain thine integrity ? curse God and die." What is the use, they will say, of such exact goodness ? you may as well give it up ; for you see it does not save you from ill-usage and suffering.

Thus the enemy moves us to discontent, when we are afflicted or ill-used : but still more does he encourage us to sin, when we are in strong temptation from our own passions, or the evil example of others. He will at such times set us on thinking, that surely our passions are stronger than other men's, and, therefore, there is more excuse for our giving way to them. And if we see or hear of others who have overcome the same kind of danger, and kept their innocency, though ever so strongly tempted, he tries to persuade us that they perhaps were differently made from what we are ; or that perhaps they were not, in reality and in secret, so good as they appear to be. Be assured, that when such imaginations come into your mind, the enemy of your souls is not far off. They are his foul and noisome breath ; you cannot take them in without corrupting and poisoning your souls. He would gladly persuade you, if he could, that there is not really such a thing as a saint in the world ; nay, that never any one was

such in reality ; that all men, at all times, have had not only their human infirmities, but even their great and serious faults, in which they have lived and died, notwithstanding the grace of God.

This is how the devil would beguile us, and a very serious temptation it is : he would have us believe, either that there never were any saints, any persons really good and holy, or that if there have been any, they were such by a kind of miracle, and that their example is nothing to us. To guard us, no doubt, against this very deceit, the good providence of Almighty God has called all Christian people from old times to learn and say, I believe in the Communion of Saints : that is, I believe in the gracious working of God's Holy and Almighty Spirit, entering into sinful men, uniting them to Jesus Christ as members of Him, separating them from the evil world, keeping them from all wilful and serious sin, and making them truly and really holy. I believe that there have been, are, and will be saints, holy persons, men and women, lifted, by God's mercy blessing their own hearty and humble endeavours, above the level of ordinary Christians : and believing this, I am without excuse, if I mistrust the power of the same Spirit to preserve me from wilful and habitual sin : I am without excuse, if I knowingly give way to any temptation, under the plea of its being irresistible.

This is how we ought to reason, who say every morning and evening, we believe in the Communion of Saints. And to help us in that holy resolution, S. Peter in the text uses two words, well fitted to stir up every good and noble feeling of our hearts.

One of these words is "brethren," or brotherhood; the other is, "accomplished," or "fulfilled." "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren," or your brotherhood, as many as are yet in the world. To be afflicted, then, is a mark of Christian brotherhood: it is a token that we belong to God's family. It is a touch of the Cross, bitter in itself, but sweet as being Christ's own mark, a portion of Christ's own burthen. To draw back from it with any sort of cowardice or impatience, is an unbrotherly thing, and shews want of family affection. Suppose a household of brothers and sisters, and some great trouble coming upon them, pain, infectious sickness, anxiety, want, reproach: which of us does not feel that true love would make them all desire to bear each one his portion of the common burthen? If any one were quite exempt, he would almost feel it unfair; might he choose, he would rather take his share, relieving, if so it might be, his brethren.

Or take the case of comrades and fellow-soldiers, what sort of spirit is he thought to have, who draws back and spares himself when the rest are entering upon labour and danger? Certainly every true soldier will understand the feeling of David's faithful servant, Uriah, who, being invited to refresh himself, when accidentally away from the army while the war was going on, made answer and said, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and the servants of my Lord are encamped in the open fields: shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink?" He was even ashamed to enjoy himself, while his comrades were in danger and self-denial: and that because he was a true and loyal soldier. Now we Chris-



tians are also soldiers, sworn and enlisted soldiers of our crucified King. Ought it not sometimes to come into our minds, that surely we do wrong to be seeking all the ease and enjoyment we can get, while so many of our brethren are suffering so much, wanting so many things which we have? It is the very thing, which all persons feel in the history of the Rich man and Lazarus. Why do we naturally dislike that rich man? Why, even before his punishment, should we be most unwilling to resemble him? Is it not because of his selfishness and hardness of heart? that he could be content to go on in his purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, while the poor beggar was laid at his gate full of sores? Something like this, I should think, must come into the mind of many a thoughtful Christian, when he sits quietly at home or in Church, and reads or hears of the toils and sharp pains of the martyrs and holy men, who, at sundry times, have given up all for Christ's sake. High and glorious as they are above us, we know that by the grace of Baptism we are their brethren; when we hear therefore of their sufferings, we may well experience a sort of shame, that we in a manner should have left them to do all the hard and painful work.

And here comes in the other word, by which, as I said, S. Peter in the text would stir us up to a godly jealousy of the saints. The word I mean is "accomplished." Their afflictions are accomplished, ours but just beginning. Our times are in comparison quiet, our course of life is marked out: we are not called to follow them, outwardly and bodily, bearing the Cross and the Gospel among unbelievers. We



are not called on to be stoned with S. Stephen, nor to be banished with S. John into a lonely island. Have we then any chance of those blessed and glorious titles, which such as they were might give to one another? Can we in any sense be their "companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ?" We may be so, at least in some small degree, if we will strive to meet our simple and lowly trials, and to work out our humble tasks, in the same pure self-denying spirit, in which they suffered exile and martyrdom. When, for Christ's sake, you put up with rude words, with cross and sullen looks, with indifferent and scanty food, you are in earnest following those saints, although, it be, very far off. When you go out of your way, when you put yourself to inconvenience, in mind, body, or estate, to do a kind action to a fellow Christian, you are in the way to a great blessing: for you are practising, so far, the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and caused Him to become Incarnate for us. When you are lying on your sick bed, enduring pain which you cannot help, you may turn that pain to the best possible account, by remembering what you may have heard of the grievous pains which saints have borne for Christ's sake: and you may beseech God for grace to offer up your own pains as a kind of sacrifice to Him, together with theirs: He will graciously receive both, for the sake of those meritorious pains which Christ endured on the saving Cross.

Moreover, the remembrance of the saints' trials is full of help and comfort, in respect not only of our afflictions, but of our temptations to sin: I mean, of

course, so long as we are striving against them: as for such as give way to their own wickedness, and are minded so to go on, the thought of God's saints must be to them full of pain and shame: but to one who in earnest longs and labours to amend, the comfort is unspeakable, of knowing that even those best of men had, by nature, and in the beginning, the same enemies to contend with that we have, and if they, by God's grace, overcome them, so may we.

To conclude: whereas the Apostle's word is, that whatever we suffer, the same afflictions are accomplished *in our brethren that are in the world*, we understand that when they are once out of the world, there is an end of their affliction and care for ever. The saying carries our thoughts on to that happy time when, if we throw not away our baptismal blessing, God will admit us to perfect communion with His saints; not by their sympathizing in our sorrows and dangers, but by our entering in where they are, and joining to the song of glory which they sing. May we so practise their lowly beginnings, as not to fail of our part in that glorious ending!

## SERMON IX.

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### THE CHURCH'S CARE FOR HER LOST TREASURES.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE XV. 8.

*“What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?”*

EVERY year at this season the Church brings before us this parable of the pieces of silver, together with its fellow-parable of the lost sheep. We are used to hear of the lost sheep, and we know its general meaning at once, how that the Good Shepherd, looking after His sheep which was lost, and rejoicing over it when found, represents our Lord looking after us sinners, and blessing us with the fulness of His mercy when we repent. We are used to the parable of the lost sheep, but of this other parable spoken at the same time, the parable of the ten pieces of silver, we are not used to hear so much. Yet we may be quite sure, that our Lord had some special meaning in it. He would not have said the same thing twice over, under two different parables, had He not meant us to take particular notice of both. I wish, therefore, this day to consider a little with you, my brethren, what may be the particular meaning of this parable of the piece of money, as distinguished from



that of the lost sheep, by the side of which it stands in our Lord's teaching.

One thought, which I have sometimes had concerning it, is, that it may be an instance of our Blessed Master's wonderful condescension, His way of suiting His instruction to all sorts of people. I mean, that, as the parable of the lost sheep is clearly one which would come home to the hearts of shepherds, and others who have care of animals without doors, so this of the piece of money seems intended on purpose for women, and others who have the care of valuable things within doors. We find our Lord in other instances *doubling* His parables (so to speak) after the same fashion. The kingdom of heaven, He says, is like unto a treasure hid in a field, which he that findeth, being overjoyed, buyeth, with the field which contains it, at the price of all that he hath. And in the very next verse the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth it. Here is one parable for persons in the country, another for persons in towns and among shops: both teach the same lesson, only the one sort find the treasure without seeking, the others seek diligently and find at last. So again, in one Gospel we have the parable of the talents, in another that of the pounds: alike in their general meaning that all are trusted; but differing in that the one speaks of those who are trusted alike, the other represents men, as we generally find them mingled together in the world, some having greater talents and privileges than others.



Thus we may perceive that it was not unusual with Him Who is the Wisdom of God to repeat the same lesson in more parables than one, altering it so that each might find something to suit him. Accordingly, having first set forth the joy of the shepherd at the recovery of the lost sheep, He takes up the same strain a second time, and tells us of the joy of a poor woman, who, having but ten pieces of silver (in all about seven shillings), should have the misfortune to lose one of them, and after an anxious search should find it. Her joy would of course be great; we all know that it would be so: those who have but a very little, feel it very bitterly when they lose some of that little, and are proportionally comforted when they find it again. It is a joy which we can all understand, but none perhaps so well as poor women keeping house, and having to provide for many mouths out of a very small allowance. They well know what a trouble, what a calamity it would be, to lose, some week, one tenth of their scanty allowance, how anxiously they would look for it, how thankful they would be on finding it. And He who knows their lowly and simple hearts, and all the thoughts and feelings that are in their hearts, He here speaks to them accordingly. He speaks to the wives and mothers of poor working people, labourers and tradesmen, and tells them, "*I* know what *you* feel when you lose and recover part of your scanty maintenance; now *you* are to believe and know, that in heaven ten times more joy is felt, when a soul, that had been lost in sin, is recovered to true repentance by God's special grace.

This is the general meaning of the parable. But

no doubt the several circumstances of it have, each one, their special meaning also; deep and holy and comfortable truths are contained in them. First of all, as each Christian in the former parable had been represented as a sheep of Christ's flock, so in this parable each one of us is likened to a piece of money laid up in God's treasury, the place where (as the Prophet says) He storeth up His jewels; whereby we may understand that as a poor woman values highly each separate coin in her little stock, because it is what must buy the children's daily bread and supply the wants of the house, so our gracious Saviour sets very great store by every single soul of man, rich and poor, great and small, because it is that which He came to save, and for which He laid down His life.

Each one of them is a coin of His; for it is stamped with His Image, and marked with His Name. Our souls are all stamped with Christ's Image, for we are new-born in Holy Baptism after the image of Him Who created us: restored, by participation of Christ, to the righteousness and true holiness, in which our first father and mother were originally made. This image and likeness is stamped upon us in our Baptism, invisibly indeed, but as certainly and as effectually as the King's or Queen's head is stamped on any coin of the realm: and as we know that coin, when we see the sovereign's head on it, to belong to this realm and to no other, so the Angels, beholding Christ's likeness imprinted on us in Baptism, know and understand that we belong to Christ's peculiar people, and take interest in us accordingly. Again, as each coin has its superscription, i. e. the letters

engraven round the head, and containing usually the name and title of the sovereign, so are we all, spiritually and mystically, marked with our Saviour's Name, with the Name of the most Holy Trinity, put upon us also at our Baptism; for when we were baptized, Christ said to us by His minister, "I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The Name of the most Holy and undivided Trinity was then called over us; it was put upon each one of us; we were baptized into it; we cannot be, as if we were quite strangers to it. Thus are we in His sight as so many precious coins in His Treasury, whereof He cannot afford to lose one.

But supposing one or more to be lost, as too many are lost daily, by sin. What is to be done? Is there no remedy? Yes, He will Himself look after the lost. He had told us so before, in His parable of the Good Shepherd. But here, since it is not a sheep that is lost, but a coin, you might expect some one to be mentioned as looking after it, whose business would seem to be especially caring for coins: a banker, a shop-keeper or a money-changer. Instead however of any of these, the person mentioned is a woman. A woman, having ten pieces of silver, loses one, lights a candle, and sweeps till she finds it. Why should a woman be especially mentioned? No doubt, because our Lord meant us to think of that Power, which is always represented in Scripture as a woman; His holy Catholic Church, the mother of us all. The holy Catholic Church is alone that Power, to whom our Lord has so entrusted the spiritual good and salvation of His people, that the trust may never be taken away from her. The Church



is as a housekeeper, an upper servant entrusted with the care of the whole family. She is the true God-mother of us all. Those who stand forward at the Font as godfathers and godmothers are but speaking, in a way, for the whole congregation: they are appointed, as I have often heard say, because what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and there must be some special officers to do what the whole congregation is bound to do: but when, by any chance, there are no special godfathers and godmothers, the child is not the less baptised, nor the less presented to God by the whole Church, which is bound in such case especially, to do the remaining office of sponsor for it, i. e. to prepare and present it for confirmation. The Church then being, as I said, the true godmother of us all, this is represented by her being entrusted with the whole ten pieces of silver: for the number ten, in the holy Scriptures, is often put for the whole of a thing. If one of us, one of the Church's godchildren, fall away, what will happen? Much the same as if a careful mother of a family should lose one of ten coins, that she depended on for her children's bread. She will seem for a while to forget and neglect the rest: not that she has become indifferent to them, but because, having them safe by her, they are no present care to her: otherwise, if one of them too should be lost, you would soon see that she cares as much for that, as for the one, she is now thinking of. So it is with the holy Church, the Mother of us all. When any of us go astray, she is so taken up with seeking the lost and wandering, that some, seeing it, are almost tempted to complain, like the elder brother in the



parable of the Prodigal son; they wonder, how so much more tenderness should be expressed towards those who have so grievously gone astray, than towards others who seem in comparison to have kept their vows. But these parables help us to understand it: the penitent is like a sick child, or a lost sheep, or a piece of money mislaid: it is *impossible* not to pay more attention to him for the time; but it does not follow that the owner or parent loves the sick or lost thing better than he does the rest; much less, that he would rather have it in danger than in safety, in order that he may exercise his love upon it. Neither may we imagine that God our Father and the Church our Mother think lightly of sin because of their love for sinners: only, because there has been more anxiety about them, there is a keener and more thrilling joy when they come right at last. Well! The woman, the Church, is in this anxiety about a missing piece of money, a soul that is being ruined. What does she set about? She lights a candle, and sweeps the house, and searches diligently till she finds it. Admire her, my brethren, and you, my sisters especially, can you help admiring the most exact picture which our Lord, in His condescending love, has vouchsafed to draw of so simple and familiar a thing, a thing which is witnessed, I suppose, every day by one or another of us? Is it not awful to think of Him so near at hand, witnessing all our ordinary ways, as we move about the house? Do you not almost see with your eyes the eagerness, the anxiety, the vexation and self-reproach, with which the woman in the parable begins her search? She loses no time, but lights a candle at once, and

does not trust her eyes only, but takes the best helps she can find for sweeping the house, the whole house; not the room only, where the money had been kept: and she leaves not off for one failure or two, but seeks diligently till she finds it. So it is with our Mother the Church of God, and with all who enter into her spirit and are likeminded with her, when a soul is being lost and has to be looked after. She lights a candle: and Scripture seems to tell us that this means our using our best judgement and our natural feelings, with continual prayer to God, that we may find out the best way of dealing with unhappy wanderers, and bringing them to a better mind. For, as the wise man says, "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, lighting all the inmost parts of the belly;" i. e. if, for another's good, you want to judge what is going on in his secret heart, you must consult your own spirit, your own feelings, because one man's heart answereth to another. This must be your candle, and you must light it with fire from heaven, i. e. you must obtain by earnest prayer the light of God's Holy Spirit to help your natural feelings in shewing you, how you may best find the lost treasure, the soul of your brother or sister, and win it back to God and goodness. Then, the Church sweeps the house, she looks everywhere and all around, here and there, up and down, within and without, in likely and unlikely places; she is instant in season, out of season, if God peradventure would give the sinner repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Neither is she soon tired, or daunted, or ashamed; her love will not let her be so: she sweeps the house again and again, carries the light

everywhere, and moves it here and there, in every corner and in every room, tries all ways over and over, and will not leave off, until the lost treasure is found, until in answer to her labours, prayers, tears and self-denial, the soul that had sinned appears in God's house again; not indeed in its first baptismal innocency, (for that cannot be restored in this world,) but as a real penitent in the way of salvation.

And is it not an unspeakable joy to her, think you, when this great thing, this miracle of grace, takes place? Yes indeed; the woman, when the lost piece of money is found, calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying; "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost;" and "there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." There is joy, great joy, unspeakable joy, among those who are the Church's friends and neighbours in Christ, when she succeeds in winning back one of her lost children to Him. When, for example, any poor young Christian woman, who has been tempted to leave the paths of uprightness and to walk in the ways of darkness, to forget the guide of her youth, and to break the covenant of her God, when such an one is moved by the grace of God to true repentance, and is forgiven because she hath loved much, as feeling that she has sinned greatly! There is joy, great joy, in such a case, among the Church's "friends and neighbours." And who are the Church's "friends and neighbours?" All good people on earth, all who have the mind of Christ: all the blessed saints in heaven who pray and long to have things, as Christ would have them: all the holy Angels who give glory to God at Christmas and Easter.



for our salvation. And what shall I more say? Is not Jesus Christ Himself a "friend and neighbour" to the holy Church, seeing it is His own Body? And doth He not, as truly Man, rejoice with the Church in the recovery of a backslider with that peculiar joy which men feel, when anything falls out better than could have been expected? Yes surely, the joy which our Lord speaks of as being felt in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, is His own joy; He Himself feels it. "He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied," as often as a sinner truly repents; it is sharpness and bitterness indeed to himself for a time, but it is joy, real joy and comfort to his Saviour in heaven.

There was a time, my brethren, when the Church of God manifested this her deep feeling for fallen Christians much more openly and in a more regular and effectual way than she has done now for many years. You may read of it in the Commination service, and in the Acts of the Apostles, how grievous sinners came, and confessed and shewed their deeds, and submitted themselves to shame and penance in this world, that their spirits might be saved in the Day of the Lord. That was indeed the woman in the parable, seeking diligently for the lost piece of silver; and great was the joy in heaven for the many penitents who were so recovered to their Saviour. We in our days, until the same discipline can be restored again, which is much to be wished, what can we do less than strive and pray to have in our hearts thoughts more and more serious and alarming of what wilful sin is in a Christian? How can we ever feel horror enough of the sin, and love enough for the sinner?



How can we ever take pains enough, watch and labour earnestly enough, persevere patiently enough in finding those who have so lost themselves, or at least in praying that others may find them? Especially in our own families. There may perhaps be men and women here, who have lost out of their households infinitely more than one among so many pieces of silver. Some soul perhaps, which God had given them to watch over, has fallen and lost itself in the snare of the enemy. Let such parents or parental friends, learn here out of the mouth of Christ what He would have them to do. They are not to give up the matter in despair: God forbid! but they are by the light of God's grace to do their very best, with prayer and supplication, to recall their wandering and outcasts to a better mind. We must not despair. The commonest things, such an ordinary matter as losing a piece of money and finding it again, are a token from God, as this parable shews, to encourage us in hope, and prayer, and charitable work, for the recovery of those who are fallen. When you go home from Church to-day, perhaps the next thing that happens to you may be losing something and finding it in this very way. I advise you to take everything of the kind as a token from our gracious Lord of His neverfailing mercy to sinners repenting. O, indeed, if we would but believe and attend to it, heaven and earth, the world and the Church, all that happens to us and all that is around us, is for ever repeating the same good and gracious tidings. "It is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord," but "there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

## SERMON X.

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### THE WISH TO PRAY, A GROUND OF HOPE AND OF FEAR.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JUDGES xiii. 22, 23.

*“And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have shewed us all these things.”*

To SEE anyone from the other world, is to all men an awful thought. The Apostles in the Upper room, when our Saviour stood in the midst of them three days after His death, were terrified and affrighted, supposing that they had seen a spirit. And many times in the Old Testament we read of the astonishment and alarm which persons fell into, when an Angel of the Lord appeared unto them. Nor does anyone, I suppose, man woman or child, ever read or hear those histories, without feeling that it was no wonder; that he too should sink down with affright, were such a thing to happen to him. The

reason, as I suppose, being that all men know, by a sort of instinct, that they, "have sinned and come short of the glory of God." As far as their sinfulness goes, they have made Him their enemy; and therefore they shrink and draw back from anything, which brings Him very near them. It would be to them exceeding fear and dread, were an Angel at any time to speak to them.

And so it was to the father and mother of Samson, Manoah and his wife, the man and woman mentioned in the text. God, in His pardoning love to His back-sliding people, intended to raise up one whom He should employ to relieve them in their hard bondage under the Philistines, and sent His Angel to declare His purpose to Manoah, whom He had chosen to be the father of their champion, Samson. The Angel appeared first to the woman, and then to the man, and after he had delivered his message, he did very wondrously. "For, it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on, and fell on their faces to the ground. And Manoah said unto his wife, 'we shall surely die, because we have seen God.'" It does not appear that they were in any special way sinners, or out of favour with the Lord. On the contrary, their being chosen to be the parents of one who was to do so much for Israel rather shewed them to be accounted of Him faithful and obedient. Manoah's expectation, then, of dying because they had seen God (or an Angel in God's place) was simply such a terror as any simple religious man might feel, considering his own sins, and the sins of



his forefathers, at any vision whatever that he knew to come from God. It was a shrinking, like that of Adam: "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because of my sin,—naked as it were of God's holiness,—and I hid myself."

Now surely, my brethren, if Manoah might, reasonably and naturally, fall prostrate on seeing an Angel only of the Lord, and look on himself as in danger of some deadly visitation, it cannot be unnatural nor unreasonable for us Christians to be in fear and trembling, when we consider how the Lord hath appeared unto us, and how near He hath brought us to Himself. And especially now, at the beginning of the Sundays after Trinity, when we look back upon the whole course of wonder-working love, which we have been tracing by the help of the Prayer-book from Advent Sunday until now. We have been given to see, not one single Angel for once and away coming down, delivering his message, and ascending again in a flame from off the altar, but the great God and Creator of all the Angels, born of a virgin, worshipped as an Infant by the Gentiles, doing wonders, nailed to the Cross, buried, rising, going up into heaven, sending down His Holy Spirit. And we have had sealed to us in His miraculous Sacraments, not the promise of a single birth after the flesh, but assurance of new-birth, a holy life, a happy death, a glorious resurrection, and eternal union with Christ to all who shall not reject the blessing. Well may we fear and tremble and fall on our faces to the earth, when we consider what we are, compared with what God meant us to be: well might we say one to another, "we shall surely die, because



we have seen God." But here comes in the comfortable lesson which the collect for this week teaches us. If we have but a hearty desire to pray, if we have, but in the slightest degree, a real sense of the tender mercies we have been trifling with, if we have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, if there be but a single spark of love in our hearts, to keep the smoking and smouldering flax from being entirely quenched, if we do but wish to say, Amen, with all our hearts to one single good prayer; this is God's token to us that we may plead with Him, and say, "Inasmuch as Thou hast thus far given us a hearty desire to pray, we make bold to ask Thee to be our defender and comforter in all dangers and adversities;" and then, what shall we need more for this world or for the next?

"A hearty desire to pray," that is the gift which, in this collect, we profess to have received of God: and a great gift it is, when we come to consider it, although, at first, some might not think so much of it. For what is Prayer? Not merely saying our prayers, as a parrot might say them, without any thought or care about them, neither before, nor at the time, nor after. No one imagines *that* to be the prayer, to which so great things are promised in the Gospel. But neither is prayer merely a wishing for good things, a thought in the heart or fancy, how glad we should be, if Almighty God would do such and such things for us, order such and such events in the way that we think best. To lie on our beds, or walk on our way, or work at our business, with good wishes in our minds, is a good thing; but it is not exactly prayer, neither are the blessings of prayer promised

to such an exercise. I say this, because it appears to me sometimes, that working-people are apt to deceive themselves a little about prayer, in this particular way. They say, they pray a great deal, whilst they are at work, or whilst they lie in their beds; when often the fact really is, that they either say over some words as a mere form, or if they have good thoughts, it is not prayer, because it is not directly speaking to God.

For this I take to be the only true notion of prayer; the asking God for a thing, as you ask any one of your fellow creatures for something, which you believe to be in his power. Prayer, properly so called, is really speaking with the heart, or with heart and lips too, to the Almighty God, as to One Who is present with us, and beseeching Him to grant us such and such a favour. It is coming before Him with your wants and petitions, as simply and as really as a child, being hungry, comes to his earthly father and asks for some bread. This is prayer: and we all know the need of it: but to practise it in earnest, *that* is the hard fight. You know it to be hard, too well; very many of you, I doubt not, are but too sadly aware, how difficult it is to fix your attention during prayer, so that, when you wish to be speaking to your God, your mind and imagination are wandering far away. Some have unhappily never been used, even in their childhood, to regular habits of prayer: the whole matter is to them an awkward and difficult undertaking: they do not know how to set about it, any more than the Egyptians, without being taught, could speak the language of Canaan. There may be a few such, who would be glad to know where and

how they may find help in ordering their prayers. I would beseech them to come, as in all other spiritual perplexities, to their own Pastor, or some other Priest whom they can trust, and ask him to advise them about their prayers. Others again, though used to prayer as a work, are in some degree put out, from not fully understanding the words of the prayers which they use; and so far, they seem to themselves not to be praying, and are more or less hindered or disheartened. Why should not these also come to their Pastors, and be instructed? Why should they go on, week after week, year after year, until their whole life be spent in ignorance, when a few words of explanation, which may be had for asking, would, for all their time after, make their prayers easier, more thoughtful, more reverent? But of all hindrances to prayer, there is nothing like a heart, set upon worldly things: and this, after all, is our great distress in our devotions. We do not lift up our hearts, as we ought, to Him Who heareth prayer, because they are unhappily drawn down to mere ordinary satisfactions: it is well, if they incline not to wicked objects, which we dare not pray for. And being more or less conscious of this, we are sadly hindered in our devotions, and the devil takes advantage of our infirmities, to tempt us, if he can, to leave off prayer altogether. See then, dear brethren, what a merciful help is provided for us, what a consolation and stay to our poor frail, wandering spirits, in that we are permitted to come before God with something far less than a real attentive prayer. There is hope for us, if we can but say with truth that we have "a hearty desire to pray," that we *would* pray if we



*could.* There is hope in this, and very much hope. For if we have such a will and desire, how did we come by it? Could we possibly give it ourselves? No surely, no more than we could fetch down a star from heaven, and use it for a lamp in our dwelling-place. A hearty desire to pray is such a gift as He only can give, Who knows and rules the heart. If therefore a man feel it, if, as I said, he does but wish to say a fervent Amen to one single collect, one single petition in the Lord's Prayer, he may say to himself, "This is the gift of the Lord, this is the good hand of our God upon me, the unworthiest of His servants: I am sure now, that He has not left me nor forsaken me." As Manoah's wife reasoned, that if the Lord had been pleased to slay them, He would not have received their offerings nor have given them the instruction He did, so the Church seems to reason with any one of her poor desponding children: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted, hear what the Truth says, lay it to thine heart, and support thyself by it: it saith, A hearty desire to pray is God's gift: and what He giveth for our soul's good, He taketh not away, unless we finally reject it, neither doth it return unto Him void; He gives you this desire, and you do not reject it, you long to pray better than you do, you design and take counsel beforehand how you may pray better, and you examine yourself afterwards, whether you *did* try to pray better. Depend upon it that, in the sight of our indulgent Father, such hearty desire to pray is prayer, even as a hearty desire to be contrite and troubled for our sin is accounted before Him as contrition, and a hearty desire to believe, with a resolu-



tion to act as one believing, is accounted as faith." "If there be first a willing mind," saith the Holy Ghost by a chief Apostle, "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." This saying belongs, no doubt, to our prayers and obedience generally, and not to our gifts alone, in money, or in money's worth. One who earnestly desires to pray better will not, you may be sure, in reality lose his Lord's favour, because he cannot yet pray so well as he ought, so well as some others do. His earnest desire, coming as it does from above, will not (as I said) return void to Him Who sent it. It will surely bear fruit, whether the man perceive it or no: aye, very abundant fruit.

"An hearty desire to pray" is a very little thing, apparently, in itself; but, with the grace of God, it will prove a very great thing; a small spark, to be fanned into a mighty flame. *That* is the way of grace, to go on and improve: and it is God's way; when He begins, and His creatures do not hinder Him, He will also make an end. His will is that all should be saved; and now He has made a beginning with *you*, meaning doubtless for *you* to be saved. He will, of course, go on, unless you interrupt Him: it is not He that will stop it, it must be yourself. Your *desire* to pray, continued and accompanied by watchful obedience, will ripen, man knows not how, into a *habit* of devout prayer; your whole life and being will be happily inflamed with the blessed light and heat from that one little spark.

I have been speaking now chiefly to those who have their prayers so much at heart that they are grieved not to pray better than they do, and I have

tried to shew them what a ground of consolation they have, in that very grief of theirs. But we all know very well, that most men's ordinary state of mind is but too different from this: most men, if they do not quite neglect prayer, are yet too easy about their prayers, and apt to let them take care of themselves. But even these, commonly, have their intervals, their moments seldom, or often, of better thought: I suppose that it does, every now and then, come into most of our minds, "I wish I could pray more devoutly than I do." Well, what I say to you is, make much of that thought, cherish that good and religious wish: the next time it comes, do not let it pass away from you, and be as though it had never been. But perhaps I ought not to speak thus. Good thoughts and scruples cannot be as though they had never been: these your misgivings about prayer may be stifled and put away for the time, but they will awake, and find you again bye and bye: you will have to give an account of every one of them: the Judge will say, "At such a time you had a serious thought in your mind, an uneasiness about your prayers; it was My Spirit's good gift to you: where is it now? what advantage came of it? how came you to go on praying just as before?" Fearful questions, these: but we are as sure they will be asked, as we are that there will be any general judgement at all. Therefore, I beseech you, give ear to the whispers of your own heart and conscience; for indeed they are the breathings of God's blessed Spirit, when they silently reprove you for your sad imperfections in prayer. Attend to them; and wish at

least and keep on wishing, that your devotions may improve. Cherish above all things "a hearty desire to pray." For what is desiring to pray, but desiring to be with God? And who ever desired that, in earnest and perseveringly, and failed to obtain his desire? Not one; for He Himself spake the word, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

## SERMON XI.

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### DANGER OF DESPONDENCY.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 SAM. xii. 20.

*“And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this great wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.”*

IT IS, I believe, no very unusual thing, however unwilling we may be to avow it, for persons to give way to a kind of despair, when they are called on to repent of their sins. They say to themselves, “It is too late now: it is no use pretending to keep the commandments, after so many years of transgression.”

And what is very remarkable, men change, all at once, into this method of excusing themselves, from one the very contrary to it, in which they have spent all their lives. We know too well, most of us, by experience, how common a thing it is to break God’s plain commandments, and yet to keep one’s conscience tolerably quiet, with the hope of repenting one day or another. Thus we go on too long, walking



presumptuously : fancying we can repent when we will ; we fix on this or that time of our life, this or that day, month, or year, this or that turn of our fortunes, beyond which, we promise ourselves, we will surely not go on sinning. Time after time these occasions pass off, and that which we had meant to be our turning-point glides as it were, away from us, leaving us unimproved, or rather more hardened in sin. At last we get ashamed and tired of dreaming of amendment, and promising it vainly to ourselves : we know by experience what the end will be, if we again resolve and put off our resolutions : our consciences also have insensibly become hardened, and have lost all horror of sin, as it is in itself : and in this state of mind it is no hard matter for the evil spirit to pervert our minds in a way exactly opposite to the former. Hitherto we have gone on, quieting ourselves every day with the notion that we might and would repent to-morrow : but now he keeps whispering to our disordered spirits, "What if it should be too late for you to repent at all ?" Hitherto he has flattered us with our good resolutions, that all is sure to come right at last ; a day, or even a year, can make no great difference : but now, all of a sudden, he begins reproaching us with the same resolutions, so often made, so quickly and easily broken, and would set us, if he could, sullenly and desperately against ever again making any such good resolution at all.

Against such a snare as this, it would seem that Samuel is guarding the children of Israel, in the remarkable words which you just now heard in the text. "Fear not : ye have done all this great wicked-

ness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart." There is something remarkable in the very sound of the words: "Fear not: ye have done all this great wickedness." Why, how could they choose but fear, with great wickedness on their conscience? But it is plain the words were not intended to check, but to encourage, the wholesome fear of God. They were to beware of that sullen fear, which would make it impossible for them to repent; they were not to doubt, that wicked as they had been, and irremediable as their wickedness might be in some respects, still their best and only true wisdom lay in following the Lord for the future with all their heart.

Let us look a little more nearly into the case of those Israelites. We may, perhaps, find it more exactly resembling our own than we might imagine at first thought.

The great wickedness which the Israelites had done was this; that having been especially chosen and set apart by Almighty God to be His own people, and having so gone on for many years, receiving from Him peculiar and distinguishing favours, they were dissatisfied with their own condition, and rather wished themselves, as said the prophet Ezekiel, "like the heathen, the families of the countries," if not directly to serve wood and stone, yet to take liberties of one sort and another, very inconsistent with the pure and holy character of a people redeemed and marked as they were to be God's own. Their fathers had many a time fallen into direct idolatry, as you may read at large in the book of Judges; but had not, as it seems, formed in their hearts any set pur-

pose of finally forsaking the Lord. They had given way to bad passion and bad example for a time, yet when the scourge came upon them they had repented: but now, as it may appear, they were tired of finding themselves so very completely in God's Presence, and under His hand: they would fain have a king like the other nations of the world, because they had a sort of indistinct imagination, that such a change would, as it were, remove them one step further from Him, Who had as yet been their only King, the Lord God Almighty; of Whose watchful Eye and strict Hand they were weary, having found, by so many years' experience, that they could not swerve at all from His service without immediately feeling His severe judgements. It was a kind of bad liberty which they wanted, and they thought they should come a little nearer to it by having one of their brethren for a king over them, instead of being reminded at every turn that the Lord their God was their King. They might not, perhaps, distinctly say so to themselves, but He Who could read their hearts saw clearly that this was, in fact, giving way to the spirit of unbelief: it was the kind of temper, which before long would lead them into actual idolatry again. And they would have less chance than before of effectually recovering themselves from that great sin, having on purpose put a greater distance between themselves and their God.

This was their sin; most dangerous to themselves, and most affronting to the Almighty: so that we need not wonder at the severity of Samuel's reproof, nor at the awful warning which God sent them from heaven, by causing thunder and rain to come in



answer to the prayers of the prophet, at a time of year when such weather was so rare and unlikely, that all perceived and felt that it was God's own miraculous work. It was a voice from above, most mercifully sent, to warn them what would come of it, if they went on in the way which they had begun, and how much worse and more ungodly the temper in which they were acting, than they had themselves imagined. Their feeling was, therefore, not unlike that of persons awakened from a kind of dream ; they were startled at finding how near they had gone to the very edge of extreme wickedness, and there was perhaps danger of their giving way to the other temptation, which the devil commonly employs when people begin to be ashamed of their presumptuous sins ; there was danger lest the Jews should imagine that all was lost, and it was no use their endeavouring to serve God any longer ; therefore the prophet follows up his severe reproof with the gracious assurance, that they were not yet cast off : " the Lord would not forsake His people, for His great Name's sake ; because it had pleased the Lord to make them His people." As they had not been chosen at the beginning for any righteousness of their own, so neither would God reject them for all they had as yet done, provided only, that, in time to come, they would fear Him and obey His voice, considering how great things He had done for them.

In all this, may not we, as Christians, distinctly hear God's voice speaking to us ? Since we, too, from our Baptism are God's peculiar people, members of His Son, His children, inheritors of His kingdom : and we too, alas ! too often have taken a perverse



pleasure in slighting and undervaluing our own privileges, turning contemptuously away from those instructions which represent God as so very near us; refusing to believe that we are His people in a particular sense, such as to make our sins far more inexcusable than those of heathens or even of Jews could ever be; nay, too frequently priding ourselves on our being as though we had never been christened, as the Jews prided themselves on having a king like the heathen. Just so, must we not own that it has not seldom seemed to us a fine thing to know a great deal of the world, to enter into the notions of worldly men, to feel as they feel, and be praised by them as knowing persons? Surely in this way we have most of us too much to answer for, and our Lord might mostly justly and reasonably cast us off, if He would, for ever, as people who have broken His baptismal covenant, and have no longer any claim to be reckoned among His own. But He has not done so; therefore in any case we must not cast ourselves away. We may not, we must not, go on in any kind of sin, under pretence of its being too late to cure ourselves of *that* ill habit at least.

To be a little more particular. The cases in which people are most apt to give themselves up are, generally, such as these following. First, when after having gone on religiously and blamelessly for many years, perhaps through the whole of youth and early manhood, the devil prevails against any man, and he gives way to temptation, slight or strong, and knowingly commits any kind of deadly sin. The same evil spirit, who has so far had his own way with him, will presently try to make him think the case

desperate. He will suggest to his mind such thoughts as these, "You have broken your baptismal vows, you are fallen from grace: your innocence is gone, and never can be recovered: you may as well enjoy yourself whilst you can." By such whispers the deceiving spirit will lead fallen sinners on from bad to worse. But if he cannot succeed in thus making the first fall seem quite irrecoverable, if people have once taken heart to repent, and struggle out of his snare, then, as I said, his next artifice is, to persuade them that they may do the same again as often as they please: until by a round, continued perhaps many years, of real sinning and seeming repentance, he has brought them into such a state, that they feel as if the sin were a part of their nature, and that they can no more do without it than they can without eating, drinking or sleeping. Thus at first, through a feeling of despair and afterwards through a sense of thorough incurable bad habit, men knowingly throw away their only remaining chance of repentance, and with it, of course, their only remaining chance of salvation.

One of the sins, in which this sad and fatal process may be seen most distinctly, is the inordinate love of strong drink. When a person first begins to transgress in that way, after many years of sobriety, it is no hard matter for the enemy of souls to persuade him, that now he is a fallen being, both in God's sight and in man's, and it matters not much how he goes on: and again, after he has gone on many years in habits of drunkenness, we know too well how impossible it is to reclaim him.

And if it is so in drunkenness, much more in those

sins, which, in man's sentence as well as God's, bring an irrecoverable stain on those who are guilty of them : such as unchastity, falsehood, dishonesty. These are crimes on which, for one reason or another, the world has seen fit, in some cases at least, to pass a very severe judgement ; the world, I say, which thinks little or nothing of many other sins, just as bad as these : and thus, when any one has forfeited his character and innocency in these respects, he is apt to become reckless, as if he had no chance ; reckless, not only in respect of men, but also in respect of God and another life.

One might well imagine that the prophet Jeremiah was thinking on these two sorts of deadly sin, the unchaste and the deceitful, when he wrote that most fearful of all sentences, " Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye do good who are accustomed to do evil ; " as much as to say, " With men this is impossible, but not with God : for with God all things are possible."

How careful ought we to be of the beginnings, when the too certain end is such as this ! With what resolute and watchful severity ought a Christian youth to put down the first impure thought, to silence the first untrue word, to withdraw from the first tempting touch of that which belongs to his neighbour ! since in giving way he is entering on a path, along which, bye-and-bye, he will find or fancy it impossible to return ; nay, and it will be impossible, without God's special grace.

On the other hand, it is well for all, even the worst, to be sure there is hope so far, as that no one holy desire or good purpose, no one prayer or sigh of



sincere repentance through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, can ever fall to the ground useless and vain. We have reason to believe, from the words of our Lord Himself, and from the course of God's providence with Ahab, with Manasseh, and with other great sinners of the Old Testament, that any degree of sincere repentance, though it fail to obtain pardon, will at least make the difference of more stripes or fewer, a heavier or a lighter punishment. And this, and the remembrance of God's infinite mercy as shewn on the blessed and saving Cross, and the thought, "Who knows but I too, unworthy as I am, may find pardon and forgiveness, and a place somewhere beneath the footstool of the lowest of God's saints?" such thoughts, I say, as these ought to be sufficient, and doubtless before now have often proved sufficient, by God's grace, to support even an habitual sinner, in his hard and heavy task of learning to do good, when he had been all his life accustoming himself to do evil. People may, if they please, call it a poor miserable unsatisfactory state of mind; but surely it is heaven itself, compared with absolute reckless despair: and practically, perhaps, will be found nearer holiness, and therefore nearer heaven, than is the bold undoubting assurance, which some men rejoice in, and others so eagerly seek for.

Hitherto I have spoken of great and notorious sins; practices which naturally startle the consciences of all men, such as unchastity, drunkenness, dishonesty: and I have shewn what danger we are in of becoming hardened in these by a kind of despair; as if, having been long bad, we must of course go on and be worse. A word must now be added on ano-



ther way of going wrong, somewhat in the same kind, that is, by mere lightness of temper and shallowness of principle: when men, for instance, continue in the custom of profane swearing, or of dissolute wanton talk, or of backbiting and slandering, or of lying in common conversation. The sins of the tongue are apt to appear in our eyes as mere trifles in each particular instance that we commit them; but put together, they amount to a dreadful sum: and men know it: they have been taught over and over, that "for every idle word they speak, they shall give account at the day of Judgement," and that "by their words they shall be justified, and by their words condemned:" and yet, with a sort of incurable lightness, they put away from themselves all serious thought, all earnest endeavours to amend in these respects, saying, "they are too old to learn;" or, "they must have their swing out;" or, "it were well if we that blame them had no worse to charge ourselves with:" and many other ways they have of trifling with their own hearts and souls, and encouraging that, of which God's Spirit has told us, that "it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

These persons are, in one thing, unlike the sinful Jewish people as described in Samuel; they are far from acknowledging that in their way of going on they are adding a great evil to their former sins: they look upon their ill words, as I just now said, one by one, not as making up a sum of mischief; they do not consider that such sinful habits are, as it were, a smothered, inward fire, gradually consuming the whole body: they want to be roused by the threatenings of our Lord and His Apostles, and to

be fixed seriously on this thought, "What a thing it must be to go on, day by day, and hour by hour, nay, often minute by minute, offending our great God and Father by ill words spoken in His hearing, in spite of His direct warnings."

There is another class, who are especially apt to encourage themselves in sinning again by the very remembrance which ought most to daunt and humble them; the remembrance that they have sinned much and often before: I mean those who sin mostly in the way of omission; the habitual scorner of the Church and Sacraments of God; the neglecter of prayer by himself or with his family; the parent who takes no thought for bringing up his child in God's faith and fear; the son who can find it in his heart to slight his father or his mother: all these are persons who, after a time, make their bad habit itself in some sort an excuse to their own hearts: they say to themselves and sometimes to others, "It is so very hard to recollect what for so many years we have allowed to slip out of our minds;" and they fancy to themselves in some indistinct way, that a little act of kindness or of devotion will go farther, and tell for more, in their case, than in the case of one to whom such acts are familiar; making the great unpleasantness of the duty, which is an effect of their own sinful neglect, an excuse for their imperfect performance of it.

Also in respect of public duties, such changes of conduct as the world can take notice of, such as going to Church or the Communion when they have been long used to neglect it, or governing their temper, or ordering their household religiously, when for all

their lives hitherto they have done no such thing ; in respect, I say, of such duties as these, there comes in another great difficulty : a feeling of shame at the thought, how men, looking on, will deride this their late and feeble goodness, which feeling ought to be patiently borne, as a part of the penance due to such a long course of irreligion ; but too often people make the most of it, as an excuse for counting it impossible to amend in earnest.

Now the example of the Israelites and the prophet in the text shews how all these and other like cases are to be treated ; we see here how God deals with them, and may readily judge how He would have them dealt with, either by others, or by the persons themselves, whose consciences are in so dangerous and uncertain a state.

They must be spoken to very plainly, as Samuel spoke to those Jews. Though full of all kindness towards them, he neither spared them at first, in reproving them plainly for their apostasy, and telling them how infinite a blessing they were throwing away ; nor when they had uttered words of repentance, did he too easily admit them to comfort again, as many persons do, out of a false good-nature. "It is true," he said, "you have indeed done all this great wickedness ; I cannot, I must not flatter you ; your case is very bad ; you have need to humble yourselves deeply before your God : but this one thing you must do ; you must turn your attention earnestly from the past to the future ; you must live in fear and trembling and watchfulness, that you add no more to your sad and heavy account : 'Ye have done all this great wickedness, yet turn not aside



from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.'”

This one sentence of the grave and mild prophet may convey to us the meaning of the whole Scripture of God, in its addresses to those persons who have fallen into deadly sin, or habits of sin, after Baptism, and are so far sensible of their danger, as to desire comfort, and express sorrow. To such, God speaking by His Church and His Scripture, does not by any means try to soften their penitent sense of ills already done. “Your past sins,” He tells you, “are at least as bad as you imagine them : but they are done, and you cannot undo them ; very likely you may for ever have to bear the mark and stain of them : yet despair not ; the worst consequence may yet, through God’s mercy, be averted ; only lay hold in earnest of that Cross, by which hitherto you have held so slightly : fear always, but not with such a slavish, ungodly fear, as shall hinder you from doing your very best ; preserve a holy obstinacy in following Christ for the future ; take crosses, ill-usage, low spirits, the irksomeness of many duties, with all patience and submission, as a part of your appointed penance for past ingratitude : cling to your blessed Church privileges in hope, as to so many tokens that you are not yet forsaken, yet in awe likewise, as knowing that, if unimproved, they are wasting away daily and hourly from your hold. In a word, let your temper of mind, living and dying, be that of the humble saint, who, conscious of many good endeavours, yet remembering many sad backslidings, and trusting only in God’s great mercy, made his confession and prayer thus : ‘I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost ; O seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments.’”



## SERMON XII.

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### THE BLINDING EFFECT OF INDULGED SIN.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE vi. 41.

*“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”*

OUR blessed Saviour is here giving directions, in the first place, to His Apostles and the other ministers of His Word, and through them to us all. He had just before asked a question, which every man’s own heart and conscience answers at once. “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” Can one bad ignorant man be a proper guide for others who are bad and ignorant? When a traveller had lost his own way, should he meet another traveller in the like case, how senseless would it be of him, how cruel, if, instead of confessing his ignorance, he should pretend to give a direction! Yet this is nothing to the folly and cruelty of one wicked and ignorant person taking on him to guide another in the way of eternal life. Shall they not both fall

into the ditch? Who can bear to think of the fearful end of such presumption and madness? "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." If he that teacheth, knows not the way, or if, knowing, he will not walk in it; how is it possible that he who learns should find it? This is Jesus Christ's own fearful warning to careless unworthy men, setting up to be teachers. And of course the universal feeling of mankind goes entirely along with it. We all know what we think of a careless, wicked, unprincipled clergyman. We know what feelings we had, when we heard in the Bible last Sunday of the two sons of Eli, the priests Hophni and Phinehas, how by their horrid impurity and greediness and profaneness they brought ruin on themselves, and caused men to abhor the offering and service of the Lord. We know what our words and thoughts would be, if we should come to hear of the like conduct in any of those who now wait on God's Altar. All the severe sayings of the Judge of all men, uttered here on earth, would come into our minds. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are like unto whited sepulchres: ye are like unto graves that appear not: ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but their inward part is full of extortion and excess."

But now our Saviour seems to go on and teach us, that, in this and all our other indignant feelings, we have need to look at home. The very same temper which in them we so fear and dislike, we may well apprehend, exists in ourselves, like a smothered fire, a spark beneath embers, only waiting for temptation

and opportunity to fan it into a deadly flame. So we may understand our Lord to signify, and not to mean His Apostles and ministers only, when He follows up His first parable, in this part of His sermon, with a second. The first parable is that of the blind leading the blind, and seems to relate especially to those, who at any time shall venture to be teachers in His Church. The second is that in the text, the parable of the mote and the beam: and this seems to touch not teachers only, but all persons, more or less. It touches us all, with respect to the disposition we all have to look to other men's faults instead of our own. It signifies not how much greater or more glaring our own bad doings and habits are: we seem in comparison to have no power of understanding or discerning their malignity. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but the beam which is in thine own eye thou considerest not?" The mote, i. e. the least possible fault, something no bigger in comparison than the grains of small dust, which we see floating in the air on a sunshiny day. The beam, i. e. something considerable, a large scale or chip, such as sometimes gets somewhere about the eye, and when it is there men cannot help seeing it, whether the person, on whom it is seen, thinks of it himself or no. The motes then in the parable are the lesser faults and sins of infirmity, to which even the best Christians are subject, concerning which S. James speaks<sup>a</sup>, "In many things we all offend:" and the Psalmist, "<sup>b</sup> Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" Such are occasional bursts or acts of anger, fretfulness or sloth, idle words, hasty

<sup>a</sup> S. James iii. 2.<sup>b</sup> Ps. xix. 12.



censuring of others, or whatever other faults even a good man may be overtaken in, though he earnestly struggle against all sin, and permit not any to get the dominion over him. These are the motes; blemishes indeed, but neither large nor lasting enough to obscure a Christian man's inward sight, his power of knowing right and wrong: although it is true that the least one of them, wilfully indulged and allowed to gather others to it, will grow into a beam, a serious mischief, such as will darken and pervert our heart and mind. These are the motes: but what our Lord calls beams are the presumptuous habitual sins, when people wilfully go on with something which their conscience reproves them for; when they resist good advice or the motions of the Holy Spirit within them; when they look out for excuses, and try to make out that such and such things cannot be helped, and are not so very bad. Such faults as these, whether in thought, word or deed, our Lord likens to beams in the eye, because they are great and lasting mischiefs: they do not come and go, like motes, or little specks of dust, but, once encouraged or neglected, they fix themselves there, they become, as it were, part of the eye itself, and prevent its discerning anything rightly.

Such being the difference between motes and beams, our Lord here warns us, that, how plain soever we may think it, we are in great danger of being wrong about it in our judgement of ourselves and others. There is a tendency in all men to think much of the mere infirmities of their neighbours, and very little of serious faults in themselves. We see it very remarkably in almost all that the Gospel



history tells us of the Pharisees. They watched our Lord to see if He would heal on the Sabbath day; they reprovèd the people who came to be healed on that day; but they were not afraid themselves to employ that day in contriving how to shed the innocent blood of the most Holy Jesus. So great was their blindness, that they were even active in correcting and finding fault with others for offences, very much less than themselves were notoriously guilty of. They said of our Saviour, "This Man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day;" they found fault with His disciples for so simple a thing as rubbing the corn out of the ear, that they might eat it, on the Sabbath day; they pretended to be sorely offended, if one did but eat one meal with a publican or sinner: yet these same persons could, without scruple or remorse, consort with the wicked heathen Pilate, in contriving false witness against the Blessed Jesus, preferring a murderer to Him, and giving Him up to an undeserved death by torments. It seems strange, as we read or hear it: but what say our own consciences, if we would consult them fairly? Surely it is no uncommon thing for persons to speak harshly and deal strictly with others, for sinning in the same kind, in which they are themselves notoriously guilty. Proud people, for example, can very ill bear to see others proud or assuming, and are continually complaining of it. Angry and passionate people seldom fail to remark on the ill-temper of those whom they have to deal with. Covetous men may be often heard to speak scornfully of their neighbours, especially those with whom they have any dealings, for their inordinate selfishness and love

of money, and for being always too much on their own side. It is not that they think of their own doings but resolve not to seem ashamed of them, to put a bold face on the thing, to sin with a high hand in despite both of others, and of their own consciences. No doubt some have brought themselves to this: but it is not of such that I now speak, but rather of persons who by long use have brought themselves to go on without ever thinking of the bad part of their own doings at all. Their conscience, perhaps, smote them at first, but it was unpleasant, and they would not listen to it: and now they have been so many years accustomed to disregard it, that it has quite left off speaking to them on the very points which they most need warning on: they are proud, or covetous, or slothful, or discontented, without in the least suspecting it themselves: no wonder then, if they freely blame in others proud, covetous, slothful, discontented behaviour, being quite unaware that they are all the while blaming themselves. I suppose indeed, that when some remnant of good feeling does begin to disturb them a little, and make them doubt if all be going on quite right, this very way they have of blaming others serves in some measure to reconcile them to themselves: they talk eagerly against such and such sins, which they see their neighbours guilty of: their eager talk kindles a sort of feeling, and they encourage themselves to think that they really dislike those sins, and cannot of course, in God's sight, be guilty of them: and yet all the while they only dislike them so long as they are themselves free from temptation to commit them: when their own turn comes to be tempted,

then their excuses are all ready at hand. Sometimes they are really anxious, for one reason or another, to keep those who depend on them right: parents, e. g. are really vexed and shocked to have their children do wickedly, while yet the same wickedness, unrepented of, is down in God's book against their own names. David, as a king, could not endure the thought of the rich man's cruelty and oppression in taking the poor man's ewe lamb, but considered not the far greater cruelty, oppression and impurity, which he had himself been guilty of in the matter of Uriah. It needed a Prophet sent from God, to say plainly, "Thou art the man," before he could see or feel his own wickedness: so blinded was he by the beam in his own eye, while yet he could see and complain of what was but in comparison a mote in his brother's eye. It may be, had the prophet not spoken plainly out, and said to David, "Thou art the man," he would even have been the less inclined to repent, because of the honest indignation he felt on hearing the account of the cruel rich man. He would have been silently pleased with himself for his good feeling, and this would have gone along with the natural blinding power of the sin itself, in delaying his repentance and making it imperfect when it came. Such is the fearful case of those whom our Saviour speaks of, as saying to their brother, "Brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, while yet the beam is in their own eye." He sentences them in one word by calling them hypocrites, that word of severest wrath, which He was used to utter against the incorrigible Pharisees.



And yet, while He so threatens and reproveth, of His great mercy He shews the way to repentance. "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Repent in good earnest; overcome your wilful sin by those remedies which the holy Gospel ordains; obtain of the Almighty the casting out of the evil spirit of pride or lust or whatever it be which possesses you, and you will bye-and-bye receive a blessing more than you can understand, in your endeavours to amend others. While your inward sight is darkened by any one wilful and indulged sin, all that you do in God's cause is of course confused, doubtful, unsteady: what you do right, you do it as it were by chance, like a person feeling his way in the dark. But in proportion as you improve in the true fear of God, and in obedience to His holy laws, you will be guided more and more certainly in what you do for His sake. I do not say that your duty will be more easy and comfortable to you, or that you will *seem* to see your way: but that you will on the whole know how to do God's work better, and will prosper more in the thing, whereunto He sends you. This is one of the great encouragements offered to timely, hearty, zealous repentance, in parents especially, or in teachers, or in those who are in any way entrusted with the souls of their brethren. As the beam becomes gradually purged out of their own eye, they shall see clearly to cast out the mote out of their brother's eye. As their conscience becomes more tender and exact, they will feel for others as for themselves, will be more alarmed



and shocked at their sins, more anxious to do them good, more busy in praying for them, and in seeking all means of their amendment. And, besides, they will have more and more of the secret aid of God's gracious Spirit, putting it in their hearts to do the best for their brethren. Thus it was, for instance, with S. Paul; no one was ever more thoughtful for others, because no one ever was more severe to himself. Every day, and all day long, he was keeping under his body, his soul and imagination, and bringing them into subjection, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ: every day, therefore, and all day long, he was better able to become all things to all men, to discern men's spirits, to look on their doings with the same eyes that the Angels do. Ordinary persons, neglecting to walk by faith and to purify their own hearts, grow more and more hardened daily, as they indulge in good sort of talk, and in correcting other men's faults, without trying to cure their own. It deadens their sense of shame, causes them to suspect all real goodness in others: for how do they know but they are secretly as bad as themselves? It makes them also cold and indifferent to the judgement passed on sins such as theirs by the natural conscience of all men: they care not what even good men think of such things, much less what the Angels think. Hearing His voice continually and not obeying it, what do they but harden their hearts?

To conclude: it cannot be but that every hour as we go on through the world, we shall see faults greater or less, motes or beams in the eyes of such

as are with us : and the sight will surely do us harm, if we be not always severe in forcing ourselves to be moved by it to the remembrance of our own faults, and of Him Who dwells in us to help us in triumphing over them. But let us keep Him always before us, and humble ourselves always before Him : so shall no wickedness of man shake our faith or do us harm.

## SERMON XIII.

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ETERNAL LIFE, NOT TO BE WON WITHOUT TOIL.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xiii. 24.

*“Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.”*

God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. His Son was Incarnate, died, and rose again for all : that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ should all be made alive.” And yet, as it is evident by all history and experience that all men do not come, in this world, to the knowledge of God’s truth, so is the sad truth no less evident from Holy Scripture, that all men will not be saved. There will be to the end tares in the Lord’s harvest, unworthy guests in His feast, bad and unwholesome fish in His net, foolish virgins who will knock too late at His door : there will be those who shall be finally cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

And more : there is much reason to fear that the lost will be more numerous than the saved. Our Lord indeed, when He was distinctly asked a question



concerning their number, seems to have avoided answering it, and rather to have set the person who enquired of Him upon looking at home, and doing the best he could for himself. One said unto Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them," (i. e. probably to some who had come round Him to hear the reply) "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." He did not distinctly tell them that the saved would be few, but He very plainly told them the lost would be many, even of those who *did* think something of their souls. "Strive to enter in . . . . for *many* shall *seek*, and not be able." This is very alarming: but His words in the Sermon on the Mount are still more so. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." I am afraid it is but too clear from these sayings of the Judge Himself, that the saved on the whole will be few, and the lost many. A fearful, a heart-breaking thought; if we could but bring it home to our souls, and keep up our attention to it. You go into a large place, you pass a great crowd of people, living and moving, and going for the most part cheerfully about their several ways: how mournful to think that, in a very few years, they will all have passed away from their places in this earth, and where will the greater part of them then be found? and you yourself, who are looking on, are of the number, you too will have passed away, and where will your place be? can you think on it

and go away unmoved, and behave as if you were in no danger at all? You would not do so, if you were sure there would soon be an earthquake, and the greater portion of the city would perish in its ruins: you would not do so, if your abode were close to a burning mountain, and the word of the Lord had told you, "In a few days the flood of fire will pour down the hill-side, and only a few, a very few, of those who dwell there will escape." In such a case you would get yourself ready, you would remove, if possible, out of the reach of the mischief, or you would provide the best shelter you could for yourself and your family: why will you not be wise, and understand this, and consider your latter end, now that not only your body but your precious soul is in danger, not from a burning mountain but from the fire of hell? You would not in such a case easily make up your mind, that because a few only out of many would be saved, it was no use trying to be of the number of those few: it would be no comfort to you that, if you perished, you were but as the greater part of your neighbours, the people of the city: no, you would surely long and pray, and *strive* too, according as you had opportunity, for some way to safety and refuge. How is it that in the great danger of damnation you have hitherto been content to take your chance with the many, rather than follow the wise and dutiful remnant, who are making their calling and election sure?

Listen once more to our Lord's parable, wherein He speaks to you this very day. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate:" *strive*, take a great deal of pains: strain yourself to the very utmost, if need be:

as an eager wrestler or runner, or armed champion strains himself to get the better of his opponent. Be in an agony, as our Lord Himself, try all, endure all, put forth all your strength and patience: let nothing daunt, or tire, or disgust you: if by any means you may be found at last within the narrow gate, moving along the right way.

Our Lord says, "Strive," and He vouchsafes to add one reason why we should strive. A gate is appointed for us to enter into, the gate which leads to our true Home, the only place where we can be happy, and this gate is *strait*, i. e. very narrow. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life:" the gate narrow and hard to enter into, the road or path within the gate narrow also and hard to keep. So strait, so narrow is this gate and way, that it cannot be found for mere seeking. Many, many there are who know more or less of it, have a true notion where it is to be found, and really wish they had entered in and were moving along that way: but they have not the courage to take the true and only method of entering: they will not make themselves low, little and humble: they will not stoop; so the lowly door keeps them out: they load themselves with earthly riches, cares and pleasures, so that they and their burthens take up too much room to crowd in through the narrow gate: they will not be converted and become as little children, so they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Little children indeed can enter, because they *are* little children: the encumbrances of earthly desire and of actual sin have not yet wound themselves around them: they do not break off from the merciful arm



of Jesus Christ helping them through. They enter in by the narrow gate of Baptism, but too seldom do they keep the narrow way within that gate, the path of Christian righteousness which leads to heaven. To ponder the path of their feet, to look stedfastly before them, to balance themselves on a thin and narrow line, to swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left, to keep fast hold of the Everlasting Arm, which only can stay and guide them; all this is very, very troublesome, they cannot make up their minds to it: accordingly, though within the kingdom, they wander too commonly from the highway which leads to the king's presence: and yet all the while they are little troubled, because they are aware of so many in the same condition as themselves. Around them on every side they see decent and respectable men, who pass in the world for tolerably good Christians, and are such in their own eyes, and they say to themselves, "What if I *am* wilfully languid, lukewarm, untrue? What if I do knowingly break such and such a commandment? This or that person who is well-thought-of and well-instructed, takes quite as great liberties as I do: I shall be very well content to take my portion with him."

Thus easily do men hold on, hardly *seeking*, not at all *striving*, until their path in life is run out, and they find themselves all on a sudden close to the other narrow gate, the very doorway of heaven itself, which is also called strait and narrow, because none may go through it who has not the mind of Christ, the lowly, meek, humble, self-denying mind, which He so earnestly invited and charged all who would come to Him to learn of Him. But these have not



learned it: and what is the consequence? They had thought themselves, it may be, sure of going to heaven: the world and their own consciences fancied them full of good works, and alms-deeds which they did: they will be like the foolish virgins in the parable, knocking at the door and crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us:" so they will seek to enter in, but He will "answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." And as the proud Pharisees, in the beginning of the Gospel, might not enter into the kingdom of Christ, because they accounted themselves righteous and despised others, but the self-abasing publicans, and even the harlots, when penitent, entered into it before them, so will it fall out in the time of the end as between Christian and Christian, members alike of God's earthly kingdom. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door;" i. e. when the day of trial is over, and the night of judgement is come, and when the work of this world, according to the counsel of God, is ended, it will be as in orderly and strict households, when darkness and the hour of rest is come, and the family has retired and the doors are made fast for the night: at such a time if strangers who have no claim to such a favour, much more if incorrigible servants who have forfeited their claim, come knocking and demanding admittance, the master will say, "I know you not whence ye are." Unworthy Christians who had lived and died in no particular alarm about their souls, will then find their sad error too late: in vain will they plead that they were Christians, that they were even partakers of the holiest Christian mysteries and highest privi-

leges ; it will be no help to them, but a great aggravation of their guilt and misery, that our Lord had “taught in their streets,” that they lived within sound of His Gospel ; nor again that they had “eaten and drunk in His Presence,” yea at His table, yea of His own Flesh and Blood. All this will only make His answer more stern and awful ; “I know you not whence ye are ; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.” And then, what weeping and gnashing of teeth ! weeping to find themselves disavowed, rejected, shut out, cast down for ever ; gnashing of teeth for envy and rage, to see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, men how great and good soever, yet in their life time far inferior in point of privilege to the meanest Christian, to see them in the kingdom of God ; and not them only, but thousands and tens of thousands of little babes, ignorant women, poor cripples and outcasts and barbarians who could not read ; to see them high in the great King’s court, enrolled for ever among those whom He delighteth to honour, and ye yourselves thrust out ! Who can describe the horror and despair which will come upon them in that moment ? when they shall hear Him Who is Love saying to them, Depart from Me : and shall feel that they are given over to their own envy and spite for ever !

These are thoughts, my brethren, which we could not have ventured to dwell on—we should have feared to imagine such things at all, but now we cannot help it. God, Who is Love, Jesus Christ Who loveth sinners with such a love that He made Himself Man and died for them, He bids us think on these things.

He hath drawn for us in His parables many and many a picture of the disappointment and confusion of that moment; He will not let us forget, and He tells us plainly for whom it is prepared: for those among the wicked more especially, who had some notion of *seeking* to enter into heaven, but failed in respect of earnestly *striving* to do so. It is prepared for the careless, the lukewarm, the slothful, the indifferent, for those who trust in their own outward works, their good character, their good feelings, or in any way in themselves. All such have great need to tremble, lest they should find themselves turned back, even from the very gates of heaven. Who indeed can help trembling, when he hears himself enjoined by the Son of God to *strive*, because merely *seeking* is not enough? There is no man, no not the worst of sinners, but would rather go to a happy place after death than to a miserable one: so far every one *seeks* to enter in: but he that would be able to do so must *strive*: he must *strive* in prayer, really endeavouring, in spite of difficulties which seem incurable, to mean what he says, when he speaks to God. He must *strive* in resisting temptation, inward and outward; forcing away his eyes from what they ought not to look upon, never willingly praising himself in his heart. He must *strive*, with all activity and energy, to make the most of his time for God's glory and his brethren's good. He must *strive*, i. e. he must be diligent and earnest, in using all the means which God has vouchsafed him for growing in grace. His Bible will not be to him as a dead letter: it will not lie useless on a shelf: he will *strive* to make time for reading a little of it every



day: and to fix his attention always on that holy reading. The Church will not be to him a place whither he resorts for form's sake, or that he may appear among other people, and do as they do: but as long as he is there, he will *strive* to think of God as present, and to carry away the good thought with him out of Church. Above all, he will *strive* to be a regular communicant, and a worthy one. And in all these strivings of heart he will refer himself to the Lord alone, will lean on His Spirit entirely; neither hoping, nor desiring to do, or say, or think, or feel anything, but as the Holy Ghost shall teach and help him. This is the portion, the immediate portion of a good Christian, *from* and *in* his God, here in this world; given to prepare him for a better and eternal portion, which his Lord is providing for him in the world to come. God grant it may be your portion and mine: God preserve us from the curse of languidly seeking Christ and irregularly obeying Him, from putting our own will in the place of His, as unhappy Saul did, offering sacrifice when God had forbidden it, and so, in the very manner of *seeking* His kingdom, too plainly signifying that he had no heart to *strive* for it in earnest. May the Lord keep us also from the sin and the danger of depending on outward Sacraments hastily received, on Scriptures heard with the mere outward ears, on Churches attended or prayers said for mere form and custom's sake, or on mere inward feelings and fancies, not steadily bringing forth the fruit of good works! The Lord direct our hearts to Christ crucified, as our only Hope, and to holy obedience for Christ's sake as the

only way of keeping hold of Christ. "As many as walk according to this rule," it is written, "Peace be on them:" to them the strait gate will open, and He will bring them into a large place, the free and blessed air of heaven. To themselves very likely they will have seemed entirely to fail; but if they have striven on, He will know and own them, and will bid them sit down with Him in His kingdom.

## SERMON XIV.

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### THE MAN OF WORLDLY EXPEDIENTS.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 SAM. xv. 24.

*“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.”*

THERE is not a more melancholy, nor in some respects a more perplexing, part of the Old Testament, than the history of Saul, the first king of Israel. He had been raised from a low condition by the especial providence of God, and had done his duty like a good soldier against the enemies of his country. So that the Philistines were kept back, and the Israelites greatly helped by him, for many years. He had the particular affection and good advice of the prophet Samuel, one of the best and wisest persons in the whole Jewish history; yet all the latter part of his life is one continued course of sin and misery. His envy and hatred of David, who, he knew, was one day to be king in his place, took up all his thoughts. He was miserable, because he could not contrive the murder of his best friend and most faithful servant. And when he found, as might be expected, that God's



favour and protection were quite withdrawn from him, instead of doing his best to recover it by true repentance, he turned from his Maker in despair, and joined himself to His enemy. He went and enquired of a woman who pretended to have dealings with evil spirits, with the false gods of the heathen; receiving no comfort from these, and finding the Philistines prevail more and more against him, he ended his days by murdering himself.

Now it is indeed melancholy and alarming, to see one so highly favoured by the Almighty falling away and coming to such an end. No man, surely, should dare depend upon God's temporal favours, or upon the friendship of the best of men, after reading of the sin and punishment of Saul, who failed so sadly at last, though he was made king of Israel by the especial providence of the Almighty, and though he had the constant affection and intercession of so good a man as Samuel. If men will not labour to keep their own hearts in the right place, it is not either in God or man to do them good against their will.

This is the general impression which we receive upon reading the history of Saul. When we come to examine the particulars of it, we find somewhat rather startling and perplexing, which it will be best to explain before we go any farther. His falling away, we read, began from the following circumstance: When the Philistines were masters of nearly all the country, only a few men still remaining with him, and they gradually becoming fewer, he thought it would do good, and keep the people more contentedly with him, if a sacrifice were offered to God; but in strict obedience to the law, it ought not to

be offered without the presence of Samuel, or some other minister of God. He waited, therefore, seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed; but "Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings; and he offered the burnt-offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord. I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people; because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

If we judged of Saul's conduct in this instance by the measures which are common in the world, we must indeed reckon the punishment far too severe for the offence. To force one's self into the priests' office, and do these things, such as offering sacrifices, which God intended they only should do, might seem

to the generality of men but a small error, now that it is become so common, even for well-meaning persons, to do what is very like it, to set themselves up as preachers of the Gospel without any authority from the Bishops, that is, without any authority from Jesus Christ. Perhaps, however, there may be a mistake in this; perhaps that God, Who took such particular pains, in the beginning of the Gospel, to let people know who were His lawful and authorized ministers, may not be so well pleased, in our days, to have liberties taken in such things, with whatever good intentions.

It is true, some may think there is a difference between the Gospel and the law in this respect. The Gospel does not, it may appear to them, so expressly set down, *who* are the appointed ministers of God, as the law did. It leaves more, perhaps to men's faith and honest consideration; puts them more on their trial, whether they will submit themselves to what appears, on the whole, most likely to be the will of God, without waiting for clear and express commands from Him. But the law spoke out so positively and distinctly, that it was quite impossible to mistake it: "That no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord." It is not said that Saul offered incense; but he offered sacrifice, which was a sort of intrusion on the office of the tribe of Levi. And he did not wait, as Samuel had appointed, full seven days; but being alarmed at the near approach of the Philistines, and the gradual departure of his own army, took and offered the burnt-offering some hours before the regular time.



It was not, however, merely for this, or any one act of disobedience, that the Almighty rejected Saul; but it was on account of the temper and disposition which he shewed by acting as he did, and which made him particularly unfit to be king over such a people as the Israelites. For the Israelites, being God's peculiar people, were bound to be always looking towards Him with peculiar loyalty and obedience. All men are equally bound to love, serve, honour, and obey Him as their God; but the children of Israel, with whom He had made an especial covenant, and to whom He had shewn especial mercies, were bound to Him besides, in a way of their own, as subjects are to their king. They were, to use His own words, "a peculiar treasure" to Him above all nations; and were bound, therefore, to obey His directions, and submit to His will, with peculiar and entire faith and confidence.

But instead of this, they were always looking and longing after the customs and fancies of the other nations around them; right or wrong, it was a great object with them to follow their example. This foolish inclination had before led them, again and again, into absolute idolatry. They chose to be as the heathen, the families of the countries, even in serving wood and stone.

And now of late the same restless temper had inclined them, in spite of the warnings of God and His prophet Samuel, under whom, if they would have been contented and obedient, they might have made sure of living happily; in spite of this, they had been induced to press eagerly for a king to judge them like all the nations, when the Lord their God

was their King. This, it is most evident, was nothing else but want of faith and affection towards God. They were uneasy at not being like other people; they wanted to be allowed to take the same liberties that were common among the heathen; they did not like the thought of having God so very near them, and being so immediately subject to Him.

God indulged them accordingly, and set Saul over them as king. He had him anointed by the prophet Samuel, and took care in every way to make him fully understand that he was not king in his own right. He was not left to his own judgement, like the sovereigns of the nations around him, but was in all things to consult God and His prophets, and do whatever they bade him, how unlikely soever it might appear, by all human calculation, to turn out well.

This being Saul's particular commission, he being bound, above all things, to put down that spirit of mistrust and rebellion which prevailed among his subjects; and having so great reason as he had to trust God, even for those of His promises which seemed most unlikely to be accomplished, and to be sure of His being always at hand; he allowed himself, notwithstanding, to be run away with by mere heathen feelings, and to act like a mere heathen prince, on this and many other occasions.

To be sure, his situation was rather trying. The Philistines, a warlike nation, with "thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude," were close upon him and the few Israelites who remained with him. They followed trembling, and were daily fall-

ing away from him for dread. Indeed, no words can more aptly describe extreme terror prevailing in a country, than those which are used by the sacred writer on this occasion: "When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed), then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling."

It was not unnatural, that under such circumstances he should feel a little restless and impatient, should look out eagerly after Samuel, and wonder why he did not come. For till Samuel came, he was bound by God's commandment not to sacrifice; and till he had sacrificed, nothing could be done against his enemies; his army and himself must keep still in their place. This made the men discontented, and they melted away one by one. A little anxiety might be excused on such an occasion; but a man who had the right spirit, the true faith in God, would soon have recollected himself, and considered, that He saves not by many or by few, that, the greater the danger, the more glorious and certain the deliverance, provided only you take care to keep the Almighty your friend.

Saul forgot all this; or rather he acted in such a way as shewed that he was not used to think about it. As if he had been just like the rulers of other nations, who had no promise from God, nor knew of any reason to put especial trust in Him, he looked only to what was necessary according to the rules of



earthly politics. He asked himself, not, "What must I do to make sure of God's favour?" but, "What must I do to keep the people together?" and for fear of alarming them, he sacrificed, although he knew it would offend God.

It might be supposed that this was only the fear of the moment, pardonable in some sort from the greatness of the danger, and not any settled want of faith. But his conduct afterwards, in the case of the Amalekites, left him without any such excuse, and proved that he never could be depended upon to do right at the risk of displeasing the people. God commanded him to go against the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them for their sins: the people and all that they had, to their very cattle, were to be put to the edge of the sword. He spared them, not out of a false humanity (which would have been no excuse when opposed to the express command of his Maker), but because it was against the rules of human policy, and contrary to the wishes of the people. This was exactly the same kind of transgression over again; and that, after the most solemn warning, that it was impossible such conduct could stand with the favour of God. It was not, therefore, mere human weakness, and pardonable infirmity, but it was deliberate and habitual mistrust of Almighty God, which led him to do thus foolishly, and lost him the approbation of his Maker, and the kingdom of Israel.

This is yet more evident, when we consider the manner in which he answers, when his faults are discovered and reprov'd by Samuel. He is never without something to excuse and palliate his offence. In the present instance, "Samuel said, What hast

thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering." Again, observe the process when he was found guilty of that other disobedience, with regard to the Amalekites. "When Samuel came to meet him, he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Which excuse he was weak enough to repeat afterwards, as if it were a sufficient answer to God Himself reproving our faults by His prophet, to say, "The people would have it so;" or, "All my neighbours do it."

But the thing to be observed just now is, how completely Saul's way of excusing himself proves his heart to have been in the wrong; to have been, indeed, utterly destitute of the sincere love of God. Compare it with David's behaviour, when he was called to account for his sins. He never goes about to excuse himself, but owns his fault at once, and throws himself on the mercy of God. "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: now therefore, O Lord, take away, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of Thy servant,

for I have done very foolishly.” He is more sorry to have displeased his good God and Father, than for all the punishment he has reason to fear. It was far otherwise with Saul. For all that we can see, if he might but have preserved his kingdom, the loss of God’s approbation would have made little or no difference to him.

We see, then, that the Almighty did not reject this His first chosen deputy, the first anointed king of His people, for any slight fault, but for going habitually and repeatedly wrong in that very respect, which was of most consequence to the due execution of his office. We see also, that the temptation which led him wrong was his regarding the praise and favour of the people more than the praise and favour of God.

Now, is there any one among ourselves who is free from this temptation; who can say that he has nothing to blame himself for, on account of a like undue respect for human judgements and popular opinions? Consider how much of people’s time is spent in talking about one another, how eagerly most of us are on the look-out to know what is said and thought of us by our neighbours, how quickly judgements of that sort travel, and how wildly and inconsiderately, with how little regard to truth and religion, men pass sentence in general, one upon another; and you cannot doubt, that we are all of us in very great danger of sinning in this way.

How is it that people, who have long gone on in habits of sin, especially in sins of omission, leaving undone what ought to be done, how is it that such persons in general make themselves easy, without



amending what they know to be so very wrong? They will tell you, they wish in earnest to reform, but they know not how to set about it, their neighbours and acquaintance will think it so very strange. For instance: what is it that leads so many Christians into useless and inordinate expenses? why do they go on, year after year, indulging themselves in all sorts of unnecessary things, to the neglect often both of charity and justice? It is because they cannot bear the idea of not doing as other people do. They fancy their life must be miserable, if they have not the good word of all the vain talkers around them; much more, if they become at all ridiculous in their eyes. They have not so much steady and active confidence in God, as to venture upon what He will approve, without fearing or caring for the laughter of fools.

This I apprehend it is, even more than the eagerness of passion, which carries many young people so far, and detains them so long, in whatever vicious pleasures are fashionable, whether among rich or poor. A man is tired, for instance, of bad company and drinking, and willing enough to give it up; but he cannot make up his mind to the laughter and abuse of his worthless associates. Every body sees the mischief in this case; but there are a thousand others in which, though not quite so bad as this, we are however more or less the worse for regarding too much what the world will say of us. Our good actions are less good than they ought to be, and would be, from our having an eye to the praise of men when we ought to be thinking of God. We are too much pleased with flattery, too much annoyed by ignorant and unjust censure.

We may think it strange that Saul, who had been brought so near God, and knew himself to be under an especial providence, should have trembled so at every idle notion of the people's disliking or forsaking him : but let us only compare our own real feelings with regard to secret and to open sins. Is it not too often the case, that we shudder, and are ready to sink, at the thought of being discovered by our fellow-creatures, but are easy enough under the consciousness that God knows and watches our secret faults ? so easy that we do nothing towards amending them. If so, it is clear we are so far like Saul as to fear the opinions of men more than the unerring judgement of God : and were a temptation like his to come upon us, what hope could we have of standing ?

May Almighty God, Who knows our hearts, enable us all, without delay, to amend what is wrong in our dependence on other men's opinions : may He keep alive in our minds such a thought of His fearful presence, as may render us, in comparison, indifferent what our fellow-mortals say and think of us : may the Last great Day be ever uppermost in our hopes and fears, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to do right for God's sake. "For they that honour Him, He will honour ; and they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed."

## SERMON XV.

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### THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 SAM. xvii. 37.

*“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He shall deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”*

DAVID, as we all know, is called in Holy Scripture by one of the highest titles that can be given to the children of men. He is called, The man after God's own heart. When Samuel, in God's name, gave Saul the first notice of his being to be rejected from the king's place and state, it was told him also, “The Lord hath sought Him out a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath appointed him to be ruler over His people.”

This naturally sets us upon considering, what there was particularly pleasing to Almighty God in the character of His servant David, that he should be counted worthy of so high a title ; a title, which one might imagine the very Angels might covet.

Now one obvious way of making out what it was



in holy David, which is thus providentially recommended to our special imitation, is to see what it was in Saul which forfeited God's favour, and caused him to be rejected. And it would appear as if the Lessons of our Church for the Sundays at this time of year were selected with a view to this very purpose, namely, To help us to understand and imitate David, first, by comparison with his opposite, Saul, and afterwards by setting forth his own character, as he shewed it in the fight with Goliath.

First, then, as to Saul's sin, the particular sin which caused God first to cast him off, and make mention of David in his stead; it was taking on himself to offer sacrifice, without waiting for Samuel to come, whose office it was to do so. And why? because he was afraid the people would else be afraid to stay with him; the enemy would come upon him and find him alone. It was just the same kind of wrong temper, as caused him afterwards to disobey the command given him, that he should utterly destroy the Amalekites. He spared the best of the spoil and the chief of the prisoners, contrary to God's known command, because he saw it would be unpopular to destroy them. According to his own confession, he transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and Samuel's word, because he feared the people, and obeyed their voice. In a word, he would not go on simply trusting in God, but mixed his own miserable human devices and policies with the plain commands of the Most High; nay, and set aside God's Word, because himself and the people could not see the reasonableness of it.

This was Saul's sin; and in reproving him for it,

God gave him to understand that he had forfeited the kingdom by it; forfeited it to a neighbour of his, who was better than he, better no doubt in that very respect more particularly, wherein Saul had so sadly failed. This would lead us to expect in David a character full of that good thing, which is most opposite to Saul's sin; to his cowardly, worldly, unbelieving policy. We should expect to find him particularly eminent for single-hearted trust in the God of Israel; obeying His commands at once when he knew them, without looking after reasons, or calculating what might come of it; without waiting to see if the people approved it or no. As Saul blemished all his services by thinking always of himself, his own praise, profit, and consequence, so we should expect to find in David something particularly disinterested: a generous forgetfulness of himself, a mind taken up entirely with his God.

This is what we should expect in the man after God's own heart, judging by the faults, for which his predecessor Saul was rejected. And such in fact we find David, as his history comes out before us, and more especially in the account of his combat with Goliath, which forms the Lesson for this Sunday in the afternoon. There is in it, throughout, what may be called the perfection of the *youthful* character; a single-hearted way of going about every thing, when once he was certain that the cause of God required it of him. There is a combination of courage and modesty in God's service; a zeal to do, if possible, some great thing for Him, without any disposition to value himself on it when done. He does his duty, and claims no reward, and goes on serving his master

Saul as loyally and faithfully ever afterwards, as if he had not laid him under any particular obligation. In a word, he seems entirely to forget himself, and to be carried on, as by a breath from heaven, towards every thing that is right and noble.

This is quite plain to every one who reads or hears the chapter with ever so little attention. But two or three remarks may be made, which will serve perhaps to bring out the character of this great and holy soldier of God a little more fully than all might otherwise consider it.

Firstly, it is well to remember here, as in every other part of the early history of David, that before this time he had been chosen out by special message from God, and anointed to be king, and knew himself to be so. He knew himself to be marked out from the beginning for the highest place; yet never on any occasion does he shew the least disposition to press into it. He seems indeed conscious that God was especially with him; without some inward call of that kind, it might have been presumption in him to stand forward as he did; but he takes nothing upon himself, seeks not, that we find, any kind of honour or reward, asks Saul's leave to go, and takes his directions as far as he can, and dutifully and affectionately obeys and serves him, for all his ingratitude, for many years after.

One can judge the better of David's singleness of heart, by comparing him with others, mentioned in Scripture as having had prophecies made to them, that they should one day come to reign. Jeroboam was told that he should reign over ten tribes; and he seized the first opportunity to tempt the discon-



tented Israelites to rebellion. Hazael was told that he should be king of Syria in his master's place, and he presently committed murder and treason at once; he destroyed his master, to come the sooner to the crown. These examples shew how strong the temptation to David, to raise himself by putting down Saul, had he been selfish like ordinary men. He might have said, as weak and wicked people in such circumstances often do, "I am but forwarding what is decreed; I am about a sacred work, accomplishing God's own purpose; I know, God means me to be king, and Saul to be put down; how then can I be wrong in setting about God's work?" Thus David might have reasoned, had he been selfish and worldly; and on the world's rules it would seem hard to answer such reasonings: but David knew nothing of the world's rules; he went by the rule of faith. He knew that "God has no need of the sinful man," and that He can accomplish His purpose a thousand ways, without any help from our feeble and unworthy devices: therefore he left God's promise to itself, and only looked after his own duty.

Observe what his argument was, when Saul would have persuaded him that he was too weak to fight the Philistine. He had recourse at once, not to the promise of the kingdom, but to God's past preservation of him, and to his certainty that he was undertaking God's own cause. "Thy servant," he said, "kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and he (that is, the lion) rose up against me, and I took him by the beard, and smote him,

and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

This is what we should call, in familiar language, a plain, straightforward, manly way of taking things. "God," he argues, "has delivered me once out of one great danger, which I met in the way of my duty: will He not deliver me this time also? more especially seeing that it is His own cause, the cause of His people. Tell me not of the difference between us, that I am but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth: that the staff of his spear is like a weaver's beam, and that his spear's head weighs six hundred shekels of iron, while I have only a sling and five smooth stones out of a brook: tell me not of such things as these; the Name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, is more on our side than all such things can be against us; in that I go forth, and in that I am sure I shall prevail." This was the simple and single-hearted courage of David, and thus he proved himself the man after God's own heart.

And perhaps one may add, as another instance of the same sort, the psalm which, according to many old writers, he made and sang on this very occasion, the eighth psalm; in which, when he says, "Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength, because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger," it is supposed by many that he refers, in the first place, to the wonderful deliverance which God had just wrought by him. By him, who, compared with Goliath, was but a very babe or suckling, it had pleased

the Lord to still the enemy, that is, to put down the boasting of the Philistines; and also to quiet the avenger, that is, to silence the restless murmurers among God's own people, who, instead of letting Him choose His own time and way, were for taking the matter into their own hands. Such persons, as well as open blasphemers, God would reprove by such examples as this of the slaughter of Goliath, shewing that He can do the greatest things by the poorest and most unlikely means.

This mention being just made of himself, and that in the slightest way putting off all glory from him, the holy Psalmist goes on to speak not at all more of Goliath, or of what God had just done by himself, but he passes to God's high praises as Creator of the whole world first, then of man in His own image; and so he ends in a high strain of prophecy, of the exaltation of man's nature in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a psalm, written at such a time, is surely to be added to the tokens which the Scripture gives elsewhere of the sort of person that David was: forgetful of himself, and entirely devoted to his God; naturally courageous and active, and very earnest in every thing which he undertook; and now, in his early youth, giving up himself, with all his courage, activity, and earnestness, to the glory and service of Almighty God, to which, as he knew, he had an especial call.

Such was the person so honoured by the great Lord and Father of all, as to be made the most remarkable type and figure of our Lord and Saviour as Head of the Church militant in earth. For so both the Psalms and Prophets, and the New Testament,



do undoubtedly teach us to think of David. We do not read his history to the right purpose, except we see every where in it the Person of our Lord, contending for our sake with the enemies of our souls. When we read of Goliah, we are to think of that evil spirit, who is for ever defying the armies of the living God, and of the powers of the world, which, to the eye of sense, appear so far beyond all resistance of ours. When we read of David offering himself to go and fight with that Philistine, we are to think of Him who "looked, and there was none to help, and wondered that there was none to uphold: wherefore His own arm brought salvation: He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him." When we see David declining Saul's armour, in which it was proposed to clothe him, we may remember our Lord refusing all help from any of the means which men rely upon: becoming poor, that we through His poverty might be rich: making Himself of no reputation, and taking on Him the form of a servant, and through death overcoming him that had the power of death. We see Him for the time made a little lower than the Angels, that He might be afterwards crowned with glory and worship, and have all things put in subjection under His feet: even as David, having been before anointed king, claimed no kingly power, but went into combat with the giant helpless and unarmed, and when he had slain him, submitted himself to be Saul's servant, to be reviled, persecuted, and banished, for many years, before his throne was established according to the promise.

David, then, by his simplicity and singleness of

heart, came to be a glorious type of our Lord and Redeemer. And being so, he was, of course, a type and pattern of His Church also, and of every member of that Church, in her and their contention with this evil world. His courageous way of not waiting to consider and calculate, but saying at once when he saw what was going on, "Let no man's heart fail, thy servant will go and fight:" this courage, I say, of young David, may teach us the temper, in which Christ would have His servants enter on their warfare with sin, especially in evil and dangerous times. He would not have them too exact in requiring to see their way clearly, and to have the use of all His ordinances made out to their satisfaction. He would have them take part with Him and His Church boldly, yet humbly, making trial of the things which are not yet seen. He would have them, as He Himself said, like little children, without fear, because they are wholly resigned to their parents' will.

That is the general outline of the character, which the Holy Ghost teaches us by the example of David to regard and practise as the true Christian character. More particularly we may mark in it certain qualities, which, being examined, will be found, as I said, especially suitable in young persons, such as David then was; persons just setting out in life, with all their natural courage and high spirit fresh on their minds; persons who have not yet thrown away the blessed opportunity of consecrating their best and first fruits to God, and glorifying Him by an early piety, rather than by a late repentance.

Such persons are naturally bold and courageous;

it ought not then to be so hard a lesson, when we tell them to be courageous in serving God ; to look their difficulties in the face, and fairly to meet them. It may be, some temptation or other seems to you stronger than the rest : your natural temper, or the condition of your life, makes it to you like a Goliath, a giant enemy. "This," you are inclined to say, "cannot be resisted. I hope it will not come on me; for, if it does, I shall surely be lost." Nay, but remember what the Church teaches us to pray every morning; "that we, surely trusting in God's defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries." Let us not use ourselves beforehand to think any temptation irresistible, either for ourselves or others. Fear them indeed we must for ourselves, but we may resist and overcome them by God's grace.

David went out in the way of duty to meet Goliath, not at all ignorant of Goliath's strength, but neither at all forgetting the greater strength which was in himself. He felt in his heart his own high calling, to do and suffer great things for the Lord's people, as being anointed to be one day their king : and what if Saul and all the men of Israel feared to accept the Philistine's challenge? David had that within him, which told him that he need not fear : and has not every Christian the like? Does not S. John say distinctly of every Christian, "Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world?" and does not S. Paul, speaking in the name of us all, say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me?"

Let no man's heart then fail within him, because of any spiritual danger, which the world chooses to



call irresistible. In every age, every profession, every situation and way of life, there is apt to be some such trial as this, some one besetting or ordinary sin, which it is accounted almost a matter of course to fall into; and people have not even the courage to make so much as one good resolution against it. So it is, very often, among young people in respect of sensual pleasures, more or less profane and unclean: so among servants and persons otherwise trusted, in respect of what seem to them little liberties, trifling, moderate acts of disobedience: so among tradesmen and persons in business, in respect of certain dishonest artifices, and modes of gain, which each disapproves separately, yet each practises them without scruple, because he supposes all the rest do. In each of these cases the besetting sin is a Goliath, which those who are like Saul and the rest are afraid to meet: but the Davids, the men after God's own heart, the loyal children of Christ and His holy Church, they will remember the anointing which they received in Holy Baptism, and which yet abides in them: they will go forth to meet the enemy, not rashly, as running into temptation, but by good resolution, armed with diligent prayer: they will call to mind the sign of the Cross in their foreheads, and their vow to be soldiers as well as servants of Christ, and will brace up their minds as true soldiers, not to give way, let others do as they please.

This will be their mind, as to resisting direct temptation to sin and sinful indulgence: and another part of their youthful devotion will be a zeal, like that of David, to omit nothing whereby they may glorify God. They will not indeed hastily press forward, as

though they were worthy to do great things in the sight of men, but they will be on the watch for opportunities of denying themselves more entirely than they have yet done, and sacrificing their all to God in secret: and when His providence really gives them a chance to do any thing to His glory and the increase of His kingdom, they will joyfully and thankfully do their best, not enduring to hear the God of the armies of Israel defied, His Church and Sacraments treated irreverently, His clear commands laughed to scorn, as things impracticable and unsuitable to these times. They will, therefore, keep their ground firmly against all manner of censure and ridicule, as David, when his elder brother reproved him contemptuously, and called his interference mere pride and naughtiness of heart, or at least mere childish, meddling curiosity, as though he only came down to see the battle. When such charges are brought against young persons, zealous in serving God, and in abiding by His ordinances, they may calmly encourage themselves with David's answer, "What have I now done? is there not a cause?"

What do we, they will say, for example, if we attend Church more diligently than some persons think necessary, as often as ever we have opportunity? What, if we look constantly and above all things to the Holy Communion of our Lord's Body and Blood, as the very crown and keystone of our religion on earth, and earnest of all heavenly privileges? What, if we therefore begin early, and continue always, in attendance, on God's altar? What, if in order to do this worthily, we discipline our souls and bodies with frequent prayer, with regular fasting,

with abstinence from many pleasures? What, if we are very strict in our language, refusing to be entertained with such words as we know the Angels cannot love to hear? What, if we be scrupulously particular as to our behaviour in God's House, and in other respects treat holy things in a way which the world may call superstitious? What, if we be very careful in choosing our companions, taking no delight in the wicked, however pleasant and however much praised by the world; and sometimes practising a holy severity, and withdrawing ourselves from conversations and companies which others think may be innocently indulged in? "Is there not a cause," a great cause, for all these and the like doings? Are they not a part of holy zeal, of youthful courage in God's service? Supposing them tempered with true humility and serious fear of ourselves, as in God's awful Presence, are they not part of that praise which He has ordained for Himself out of the mouth of babes and sucklings?

Surely it is becoming in a young Christian, nay, and in a Christian of any age, to have such thoughts as these, both in arming himself against temptation, and in making and keeping good resolutions for the future; proving his zeal all the while, and trying it, as before God, by such measures as the example of David supplies; not indulging it in mere youthful fervour, in the confidence and self-satisfaction of high spirits and a light heart, but seeing to it, that he take no praise to himself, that his duty being done in any difficult instance, he joyfully retire not only from other men's praise, but also from praising himself for it: retire, I say, to the contemplation of



Almighty God as He is in Himself, in His Church, and His Scriptures: as David retired from his exaltation on Goliath's fall to the thought of his Creator's glory and mercy in making man after His own image, and preparing to set him at His own right hand.

Again, it will be a good sign of a Christian's zeal being simple and sincere, if he be not anxious to invent ways of his own, but rather do all by the ways God has appointed in His Church, and when these seem to fail, leave Him to do the rest; as David, knowing what high things the Lord had prepared for him, abstained entirely from seeking out any means of bringing about his own exaltation. He did his duty, indeed, in destroying Goliath, but was in no hurry for his reward: he was best pleased to stand still, and let God take His own time.

If your Christian zeal be thus submissive and patient, you need not be afraid to cherish it, as David did, by the remembrance of past mercies, and special providences shewn even to yourself: you may venture to take every such thing as a pledge of our great God and Saviour's gracious approbation. David looked back to the slaughter of the lion and the bear; and may not every Christian look back on his own Baptism as a special providence? when he was delivered from the kingdom of darkness, from the roaring lion, who walketh about seeking whom he may devour, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son? And may he not, in virtue of that Baptism, thank God, and take courage to overcome the mightiest spiritual enemy, to go on from strength to strength in all holy desires, good counsels, and just works?

And still, as we grow and go on in well-doing, as God's mercies continue increasing, so should our remembrance of them : and every fresh resistance of temptation, every new rule and act of silent self-denial, high charity, and strict obedience to God and His Church, will be a fresh ground for us to fall back on, and take courage for the next temptation that comes : and so on till the end of our lives, taking our spring and start from our Baptism, we may by God's merciful help, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

Can this be too much to ask of a Christian, of one who has been born of God, and has the Holy Spirit abiding in him, to transform him into the likeness of Jesus Christ? No, surely it is not too much ; we may have lost great opportunities, but deep, painful, continued penitence will restore us at least to some low station in the number of those who are endeavouring to become "men after God's own heart." And some there be, at least among the younger, in this and in every congregation, whose baptismal blessing, by God's mercy, is yet entire, who have not yet sunk into habits of wilful irreligion, nor stained their holy robe by any gross sin. To such I would say, "Know and understand your own blessing. You are the persons to do great things for God : you have especial helps and encouragements to zeal and self-denial, and entire devotion of yourselves. But here lies your trial. You cannot but be aware of some one point of duty which is harder to you than the rest, some one evil thought or work into which you are apt to fall. This is your Goliath, this is the foe you must defy in the strength of the living God.

Set about that good work without loss of time, in the spirit of David, with courage and modesty; not in your own arms, but in the armour of God and His Church: set about it and persevere: subdue in secret your secret faults, whatever such a struggle may cost you, and you may hope for a great reward. You may help to slay not thousands only, but tens of thousands of spiritual enemies. Only hold that which you have from your Baptism to your grave: let no man take your crown; and who knows but that our bountiful God may turn that one crown into many, like the crowns of David, or of our Lord and Saviour Himself?"



## SERMON XVI.

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### THE ALMIGHTY WITNESS.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 S. PETER iii. 12.

*“The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil.”*

WE are in God's sight every where, and at all times; and not only within sight of Him, but we know that He is actually looking towards us; He is noticing what we do, and taking account of it: His awful Eye is turned upon us, whatever we do and however we do it: and His Ear is open to all our words, with whatever mind we utter them. We say and do many things in a hurry, or by force of habit, almost or quite without knowing it ourselves: at any rate, we forget a great many the next moment. But the Almighty Witness marks and remembers all; our own conscience, when most watchful, is but a feeble and partial echo of what He sees and knows concerning us.

We, and all we say, do, or think, are in God's

sight continually: but He is far above out of our sight. He looks at us, but we see Him not looking. Our evil, corrupt, discontented words pass from our lips into the air, and seem as if no one heard them. Our ungodly, unkind deeds are done, and it seems as if there was an end, as if no notice was taken of them. This was the mystery which perplexed the holy Job, and hung heavy on his heart, how God should be ever near, ever looking on, yet so completely hidden from us. "He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not. I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." This is the trial of our faith: whether we will think of Him, and turn our minds towards Him, and really recollect that He is watching us, though He seem to give us no token of His Presence.

This is the trial of our faith. It may be a hard trial to go through, but it is surely not at all hard to understand; not at all hard for us to judge at any time, how we are behaving under it.

Consider: when we are in sight of any one whom we love and fear, any one whom we greatly care to please, do we not of course watch that person's looks? do we not naturally often look up, from our work, or our amusement, or whatever we are engaged in, to see whether he is looking towards us, and with what expression of countenance? If he looks pleased, is it not the greatest encouragement? and the greatest trouble, if we see vexation in his countenance? and

if he seem to neglect and forget us altogether, are we not greatly disappointed? Surely there is no one thing which we more constantly experience than this, the very great effect which the eyes of men have on the mind and behaviour of those who watch them. By their means we are able to read what passes in our neighbour's mind, sometimes at no small distance: as quick as lightning, we understand what he thinks of our doings, what he would have us do: and, for very shame, we keep from doing things, to which we should otherwise be strongly tempted, because we know what sort of a look such and such a person would turn upon us, and we feel that we cannot bear that look.

This constant regard to the eyes of our fellow-men, such of them as we look up to, is it not something providentially ordained to put us in mind of the Eye of God, continually turned towards us, and of the obedience which we owe to It?

There are many wickednesses which the most profligate person would at once be checked in, if he did but perceive that but a child's eye was upon him: so it would be with us in all wickedness, all wilful deliberate sin, did we really and truly bring the fact before our minds, "Thou God seest me;" Thine eye is cast down from Heaven directly towards where I am: Thou needest no candle nor light of the sun, for to Thee "the night is as clear as the day." Those who have the least religion, the least faith in them, must believe as much as this: yet only think what a change it would make in the whole course of most of our lives, did we really act as this belief would require. How serious should we be,



how tender in our conscience, how exact in our words, how fearful of doing harm, if we went about every where with this impression, that the Eye of God was over us, and His Ear open to our words; that His Countenance is at every moment, could we but see it, turned to us in wrath or in favour! As it is, we believe these things, *i. e.* we dare not deny them when we are told of them; we know in our hearts that so it is: but we do not think of them, we take no constant pains to live as if they were all true; and thus men go on, in sight of God, knowing themselves to be so, yet behaving as if there was no God in the world.

The Apostle goes on to signify that our faith in God's presence is particularly tried in our prayers: His Ear and His Eye are then towards us in a more especial manner. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil." The Psalms are full of such promises: "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them:" but "if I incline unto wickedness in mine heart, the Lord will not hear me."

What an awful thing is prayer, when you regard it in this light, that it is coming into the immediate Presence of the great God of heaven and earth, Who is either pleased or angry with us beforehand, according as we have been behaving. This very morning, for instance, each of us, I suppose, said his prayers. Did we seriously think what we were about at that moment? did we seem to ourselves to perceive the awful Eye steadily looking down into our hearts, as some bright star in the heavens, when we look

up to it, seems to be gazing upon us? Whether we thought of it or no, God's Eye was surely turned towards us, when we said our prayers this morning, either in approbation or in displeasure.

He kept, indeed, out of sight : we could not watch His Eye, as we can the eyes of our parents and friends on earth, when we ask them for any favour and wait for the answer. Yet we may with some certainty know, with what kind of Eye He then looked down upon us : whether He was pleased with our prayers or no. If we prayed with sincere intention to do what is right in all things ; if we really meant what we said, when we came to the words, "Deliver us from evil ;" then no doubt the Almighty's Ear was open to our prayers : then, for all our sins and backslidings, we were accounted righteous before Him, and the grace and blessing of our Baptism not entirely worn out. But if we were still in a way to do wilful sin ; if when we said, Deliver us from evil, that is, Deliver us from all sin and wickedness, our heart secretly wished to be indulged in some one favourite sin ; if we permitted and allowed that wish, then we have great reason to fear that the face of the Lord was against us when we were on our knees before Him : then, it may be, our very prayer, which ought to be our greatest safeguard and help against sin, was itself turned into sin : then the fearful saying in the Proverbs, it is too likely, may have been fulfilled in us : "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord : how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind."

Perhaps you will say, you find it hard to judge truly of your own heart, you cannot so turn your

eyes inwards, as to know well at the time what your purposes towards God were, or to remember it exactly afterwards. This can hardly be quite true; because every man can surely tell, whether he means in good earnest to resist all sin or no. But this at least you can attend to and know: whether after your prayers, when temptation comes again, you resist the sin, the least motion towards it, more heartily than you had done before; whether you are on the whole getting the better of it or no. This will help you much in judging of your own prayers. When you have prayed against envy, or slothfulness, or unclean desire, and yet on the return of those passions you permit and indulge them, you may be tolerably certain, there was some great blemish in the last prayer you made against those sins: and again, if the prayer was made without courageously and seriously intending to have nothing to do with the sin, too surely will the devil prevail against us, by that sin, before long.

Now then, consider what a thing it is to have this great trial of ourselves twice every day at least, and as much oftener as men offer solemn prayers to God. As often as we open our mouths to God in devotion, we speak either truth to Him or falsehood; we either intend to keep all our baptismal vow, or we do not intend it. And God, as often on His part, has His ears either open to our prayers, or in His just wrath against us.

So it was this morning, so it will be again to night, so again to-morrow morning, and so continually every morning and evening, until we have uttered our last prayer in this world. Think what a sum of good or evil we are thus heaping up for our own souls; what



a blessing or a curse must follow, upon the Eye of the Almighty being turned towards us so many times, in favour or in anger ! Think what it will be, when the shadows are past, and the light of open day shines, and we see things really as they are, to behold with our eyes the overpowering excess of glory or shame, of love or anger, which we have thus been preparing and treasuring up for ourselves, so many days, so many years. Persons, who have not thought much of the matter, are often astonished when they come to sum up their accounts, on finding the large amount of some payment or receipt, small perhaps in itself, but very long continued. May we not well believe that such astonishment is but a faint image of what will be felt in the great day, when all the prayers of every day of our life, how we have offered and how we have kept them, will be gathered up into one sum, and we forced to contemplate it ?

Moreover, it seems likely that our more solemn devotions, such as we have offered up in times of unusual trial, deep affliction, or pressing danger, and especially our communions and preparations for the Holy Communion, will appear in a particular manner, set down for or against us in that dreadful account, as we shall have dealt in them sincerely or feignedly with our God.

Christ, when He calls us to the Communion, does as it were turn and look upon us, as He looked upon S. Peter, and called him to Himself after his three denials. S. Peter never forgot that moment ; and we may be sure that, when he read or heard in the Psalm of the Eyes of the Lord, how they are always over the righteous, and of His Countenance, which

is against them that do evil, he had the remembrance of his Master turning and looking upon him, strong upon his mind. No wonder, then, that he was moved by the Holy Ghost to set those words down, as he has in the text, for the good of all Christian people; especially of such as are tempted to deny Christ, such as are in any kind of trial or distress; such as have reason to believe that God's Eye is especially turned towards them.

The heavenly Beings, whom God employs to guard and assist us, gather around, no doubt, with more than usual anxiety in such solemn moments and turning-points of our life; and the evil spirits on their part wait for the chance of doing us more than usual harm. Our Communion days were meant, in God's mercy, to be so many steps towards heaven; if neglected or wrongly employed, who would not tremble to think which way they take us? We may be quite sure that God's all-seeing Eye, which is ever over the righteous, is so most particularly when they bring their most solemn sacrifice into His nearest Presence; the Memorial of the Crucified Son before the Throne of the Eternal Father. And His Ear, which is open to all good prayers, is more especially open to the Intercession of His whole Church, offered up with His Body and Blood, for all believers and in the name of all.

Then, the oftener this is repeated, the greater surely the blessing, if we be worthy; the nearer are we lifted up to God, the more constantly is His gracious Eye (if one may so speak) drawn towards us; the more abundant is the treasure of our prayers and alms, like those of good Cornelius, for a memorial before Him.

On the other hand, think how God is affronted, when men bring before Him continually in prayer, sometimes we may fear even in Holy Communion, that which He most hates, a defiled soul in an impure body. Judge of it by whatever is most loathsome to yourself; imagine whatever is most foul and abominable to you, whatever you can least endure to have in your sight and at all near you; consider how you would feel, if it were put in your way on every occasion, and when you had least right to expect it: make as much of this thought as you can, yet is it nothing compared with the loathsomeness of wilful sin before our God, and His wasting indignation at having it brought near unto Him. And then to think that it is our own case! that such have we ourselves been in His sight, as often as we have approached Him in prayer, or (still worse) in the Holy Communion, with hearts still wilfully set upon any kind of wickedness.

God forbid, my brethren, that it should ever be so again with us! And that we may be safe, and have entirely blotted out the record of past sin and profaneness, let us be very diligent, very watchful, very skilful to take all opportunities of coming near Him. Let us come, not as we have done, but with clean and prepared, with obedient and thankful hearts. He has promised concerning such, "All that My Father giveth Me shall come unto Me, and him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." The Father is graciously pleased with all those who by true repentance and holy obedience bring His Son Christ Jesus before Him, morning by morning, and evening by evening; day by day in



His holy Church, and week by week at His holy Altar. He receives them for the sake of Christ, Who mercifully vouchsafes to abide in them. He listens not to the voice of our old sins crying for punishment, but to the yearnings and intercessions of His Spirit in penitent and humble and dutiful hearts. If a father is never tired of blessing his children; if day by day, as often as they ask him, he grudges not to repeat his affectionate prayers and good wishes; how shall not God, the fountain of all parents' love, rejoice from morning until night to answer our prayers? Depend upon it, not one devout supplication, not one sincere act of self-denial and loving obedience, will He ever allow to pass away altogether without fruit. Each and all will tend, we know not how, to the more perfect enjoyment of Christ's final, eternal absolution: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

## SERMON XVII.

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### THE SECRET OF TRUE CHRISTIAN PRESENCE OF MIND.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 S. PET. iii. 14, 15.

*“Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”*

IT is plain from many places in this Epistle of S. Peter, that the Church was at the time suffering under much persecution and calamity. Very near the beginning he says, they were in heaviness through manifold temptations. He puts them in mind that “it is indeed thankworthy, when men for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.” Repeatedly he sets before them the example of Jesus Christ, Who “when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself unto him that judgeth righteously.” “Christ having suffered, he bids us “arm ourselves with the same mind:” He will not have us be “astonished at the fiery trial, but rather rejoice, as communicating

with the sufferings of Christ." His blessing at the end is a prayer that God would perfect them, after they had suffered awhile.

Further, it is plain that one great part of their suffering arose from the *reproach* of Christ's enemies. The more we are spoken against as evil-doers, the more careful must we be to shew them none but good works, that they may be *forced* to glorify God in us. We are "to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing." We are not "to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing." We are to count ourselves "blessed, if we be reproached for the Name of Christ." Such expressions as these lead us to think on what the Christians had at that time to endure, in the way of reproach and calumny, harder, as it seems, for many to bear, than actual pain of body and danger of death.

We are not in persecuting times; the name of Christian is not yet a name of danger or reproach among us: yet we are not to think ourselves unconcerned in such scriptures as these. For in the first place the Word of God says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." So that, if we do not find it so at all, it may perhaps be a reason for our misdoubting ourselves, and looking narrowly into our own way, whether we live godly in Christ Jesus or no. Our outward peace may be a sign that we are living in too great conformity with the world; that the Evil one does not think it worth while to trouble us, hoping that we are enough within his reach already. I do not say that of course so it is: but surely there is reason for a Christian to be alarmed, when all around goes



on quietly and he has everybody's good word. He will do well then to call to mind the woes, pronounced by our Blessed Lord on those who are rich and full, and of whom all men speak well. He ought to examine himself the more narrowly, lest he be in that friendship with the world, which God counts enmity to Himself.

If therefore the world and the Church are indeed so good friends at present, that the times are in no sense times of persecution, then every word of the Apostolic warnings is indeed a fearful word to us, proving us to be most utterly fallen from the true place and state of Christian people, such as those were, to whom S. Peter was writing. But the truth is, if we consider the thing a little more deeply, we shall find that in our's, as well as in all other times, the world is against the Church. To say nothing now of public matters: there is a blind and subtle persecution, which all that would keep God's commandments have to endure; not the less dangerous, that it is not open or professed. The best way perhaps for each one of us to bring this home to his own mind, will be to reflect, whether he does not know, in his secret heart, of some portion of God's will which he leaves undone day after day, or at any rate performs less perfectly than he might and ought, for fear of what his neighbours will say and think of him. This may be more or less excusable, according to circumstances: but any how, so far as it goes, it shews that the world is still against God; and that they who would, throughout, live godly, would do all their duty in Christ Jesus, must still, as of old, consent to suffer persecution.

Indeed, which of us does not find, wherever he goes, that in upholding what he knows to be God's Truth, whether by word or (which is far better) by action, he meets with more or less of difficulty from the blame, or scorn, or coldness, or opposition of others? Now every thing of this kind, little and great, is a token so far of things being with us, as they were with the Christians to whom S. Peter was writing: and therefore the same advice which he gives to them by the Holy Ghost, is a warning from God Himself to each one of us, how we, in our several conditions and circumstances, ought to behave ourselves, on finding God's word and will or any part of it, either attacked openly, or covertly scorned and undervalued.

Now the advice and direction of the Holy Ghost to Christians under such a trial is that contained in the text. "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." We must not yield to fear or confusion: we must practise Christian calmness. It often happens, that, when men hear bold words uttered against what they most reverence and love, they are quite put beside themselves for the moment, and ready to say and do they know not what: either with anger, or perplexity, or vexation, or amazement: even as they might be thoroughly disturbed and confounded with fear, if open persecution were going on, and they found their very lives in danger, except they would somehow deny their Saviour. S. Peter himself had had sad experience of this: it seems to have been hurry and sudden confusion of spirit, at least as much as any selfish fear, which caused him to deny

our Lord. This was in his days of imperfection, before he had received the gift of the indwelling Spirit. But, along with that, came boldness and fervent zeal, constantly to speak the truth before its worst enemies : then, without violence, but, most resolutely he said, " we ought to obey God rather than man : " and " whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Thus his conduct at the beginning of his Christian warfare, taught the same lesson with his words so near the end of it. He was not afraid of their terror, neither was he troubled. The next words shew us not doubtfully, what was the secret of this holy confidence. " Sanctify," says he, " the Lord God in your hearts." The meaning of which I suppose to be, When the enemies of God and His truth set upon you, either in the way of persecution or of reproach, I recommend you to use this method of preserving your calmness, and keeping yourselves from fear and trouble. Turn your hearts, inwardly and in earnest, towards the great Lord and God Who never can be far from you. Think of Him and His awful Presence : think of Christ dwelling in your hearts by His Spirit. And, as S. Paul teaches Christians to keep themselves pure by glorifying God in their body and in their spirit, to remember *Whose* they are, and *Who* dwells in them, and so to overcome temptations to impurity, so S. Peter here instructs us to quiet our natural fears and perturbations and vexations of every kind, by an inward act of worship to the most Holy Trinity, abiding in our souls and bodies.

Suppose, e. g. (no uncommon case) that any one



speaks disrespectfully, in our hearing, of Almighty God Himself, or His Son, or His Spirit; of His Holy Church and Saints and Apostles, of the blessed Scriptures or Sacraments, or the Truths of a Christian's belief, or of any other of the things which are holy. According to our temper and principles and habits, we shall be moved by this, one way or another: one who is weak and unstable in faith, much afraid of the reproach and laughter of men, will be tempted to false shame, tempted to laugh at what is profane, or to seem to agree with what is presumptuous: another, of keener feelings and a bolder mind, will perhaps break out in anger, and say something which had better be left unsaid: a third, having a good opinion of himself, will presently begin arguing and talking too inconsiderately about serious and sacred things: and thus, in one way or another, the enemy may begin to get some advantage over us: or, if not over us, yet he may do harm to others who are within hearing: they may be led in some sort to reverence God and His Truth less, on account of our faulty way of speaking on its side.

Now in all such cases, as well as in more serious persecution, the Apostolic rule in the text teaches us, plainly enough, what we ought to do. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" and in order to be ready for such answer, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Prepare yourself to reply to the revilings or mockeries of men, or to any kind of profaneness, by inwardly lifting up your heart to God, and composing or bracing your spirits, as in His sight: breathe to

Him, in something like prayer, though it be but for a moment, and so make answer. The Holy Spirit will be there to guide you in your answer, or strengthen you in your silence, if that be best. He will be there; for He is never wanting to those who call on Him with diligent prayer out of humble and obedient hearts. And besides His deep and secret blessing, we may even ourselves perceive many advantages, which would go along with us in the government of our tongue, were we careful to maintain a due sense of God's inward presence in entering on talk about religion.

It would keep us from anger, one of the greatest snares surely to a person who fears God in evil times. Let us not imagine this a slight advantage. Remember only the case of Moses, how much he lost by indulging a sudden anger, though it seemed to be in God's cause. The people were murmuring for want of water, after they and their fathers, for nearly forty years, had been miraculously provided with it. Moses, by God's command, gathered them together, and said, in unadvised anger, "hear now, ye rebels: must we fetch you water out of this rock," upon which he smote the rock twice, having been directed by the Almighty to speak to it: and the water gushed out, and the Israelites pursued their march. If we compare this with what passes continually in our conversation and dealings with one another, it may not perhaps seem so very serious a fault. But we know what came of it. God Almighty saw fit to mark it with His displeasure so severely, that He would not permit this His most faithful servant to enter into the Land of Promise, on which he had set his heart

above every thing else in this world. We see, over and over again, how bitterly Moses felt this disappointment; how earnestly he besought the Lord, "O Lord God, Thou hast begun to shew Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand; I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon;" how sorrowfully he looks on his separation from the rest of God's people: "I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan; but ye shall go over and possess that good land." It was then the sorest of earthly punishments to him, being shut out from the rest which remained in the land of Canaan to the people of God. Yet God thought it not too severe for his sin. What was that sin? In one place it is said that "his spirit was provoked, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips:" in another, that he and Aaron "believed not the Lord, so as to sanctify Him in the eyes of the children of Israel." Putting these two accounts together, it should seem as if their error lay in this: that they were so carried away by the anger and provocation of the moment, as to forget the immediate and peculiar Presence of the most High God; to speak, as if bringing out the water was their own work, instead of His; to be angry, as if they, not He, were affronted by the unbelief and wilfulness of the people: whereas on a former occasion they had said in all humility, "What are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." In a word, their anger and vexation made them more or less irreverent: they forgot the calm faith and patience, which becomes the saints in all the tumults and dangers and affronts of this world: they spake un-



advisedly in such a way as tended to lessen in the congregation that deep fear and dread which became them as sinners, grievous sinners, in the presence of their God and Judge. Not having sufficiently sanctified the Lord God in their hearts, it is no wonder they failed to sanctify Him, as they ought, before the congregation. For this one fault, as I said, they were gathered to their fathers, before their work was complete: they were denied that which they most wished for on earth. Had they, according to S. Peter's advice, staid to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, before they trusted their tongue with words; had they allayed the first heat of anger with a silent prayer, very likely they might have been spared this sin, and the judgement of God which so surely and severely visited it. And we, my brethren, have we ever at all calculated, how little we can, in any case, gain, how much we may possibly lose, by allowing ourselves to speak angry words, when we are about God's work, reproving sinners, defending the right, checking those committed to our charge? Have we ever thought of setting ourselves this rule, to make no answer when provoking occasions arise, more especially when they arise in God's cause, without seriously thinking of God, thinking of Him as within hearing: as abiding in our hearts, and ready so to prompt us, if we apply to Him in earnest, that we may do Him no dishonour in what we say? Few of us, I fear, have been thus careful hitherto; and for want of such care, the Name of God may have been more or less blasphemed among the irreligious through us. Let us be more on our guard for the future. Let us endeavour to establish ourselves in a

habit of never beginning to speak on serious matters without a short inward prayer and offering of ourselves to God.

Neither are words of anger the only sinful and scandalous ones, from which so good and wholesome a rule would guard us. It is not well, though, of course, I do not say it is sinful, when the talk of Christians on serious matters is altogether in a confused and terrified tone, without presence of mind, not seeming to know what they say. It sometimes gives the enemy an advantage over them, and seemingly, for the time, over the truth which they hold. Now the serious thought of God's Presence would be a great correction of this infirmity. It would make man's presence, whereof such persons are apt to be too much afraid, of far less consequence to them; they would be less apt to give way to cowardly feelings, and false shame. Their faith would stand less chance of being shaken, as that of some may have been, for want of presence of mind to put by the deceiver; they will have time to hold up their shield and receive thereon all his fiery darts, and quench them at once.

Another and a far more common danger, especially according to the bold way of talking which men practise in our days, is that of falling into conceit and irreverence. How often does it occur, that persons with good intentions and right belief on the whole, are too ready, i. e. too willing and eager, to give an answer and make remarks on sacred matters; and if they seem to succeed well at first, to go on with less and less fear, till they become positively daring and irreverent. Less wise than youthful David, they

persist in wearing Saul's armour after they have once girded it on, though they have not well proved it. The temper of prayer, sincerely encouraged, would stay and cure all this. We should give ourselves a few moments to think, "This is a grave matter, it is God's cause; may He grant me, while I speak of it, His holy fear, which is the beginning of wisdom." Our words, most likely, would be much fewer after using such a prayer, but they would be wiser and more respectful; we should not be dealing lightly with holy things, as we are so apt to do, discoursing of them for discourse' sake, to try how well we can reason, or whether we can put our neighbour to silence, or make him admire us, or with some other such unworthy end.

In this way too we should be less free, than we commonly are, in conversing about high and very sacred and solemn things before all sorts of people: the Holy Communion for instance, or the Sacrament of Baptism, or the Mystery of Three Persons in One God, or of our Blessed Lord's Divinity, Incarnation, Atonement, or of His Spirit dwelling in men's hearts. All these are pearls, not to be cast before swine: and if Christians would see to it, that they never talk of these things in a hurried off-hand way, never without pausing to consider, whether they are sober and serious enough to do so worthily, never without recollecting God's Presence, that part of the world, which calls itself religious and Christian, would not be so profane as it now seems to be.

Be it then, henceforth, one of our prayers, that He that is in us, Christ's Holy and glorious Spirit, would grant us this presence of mind, to recollect before



Whom and of Whom we speak, when we speak of God and Christ, of faith and religion, that we may not be thrown off our guard either by danger or anger or any other surprise, but rather, by His grace, quench those fiery darts of the devil, and turn them into means of spiritual refreshment, making the ill talk of others an occasion of most secret prayer, and upon every temptation to irreverence endeavouring to fall down, in heart, more humbly before our God.

## SERMON XVIII.

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SIN THE ONLY SAFE WAY.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. li. 3.

*“I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever  
before me.”*

ONE of the first things which strikes a person on reading over this verse is the great difference between David and the generality of mankind. For they are continually in the way of setting some one thing, which they think they do rightly, against a whole life of sin and disobedience; but David, after a life generally spent in such true and holy courses as became the title which God Himself gave him, “the man after God’s own heart,”—David, having unhappily fallen into one great and wilful sin, could not at all forgive himself, could not find any comfort in the remembrance of deeds well done before. All his refuge is in God’s great goodness, and in the multitude of His mercies; in the comfort of His help and the support of His free Spirit. Whereas, if David had been like the ordinary sort of persons calling themselves Christians, it is very plain what

the course of his thoughts would have been. He would have said, "To be sure, this sin which I have fallen into is very great, inexcusable, and dangerous ; but I cannot persuade myself that the merciful God will deal very hardly with me, considering how faithfully I have served Him for so many years of my life, how carefully I have kept myself from idolatry, and how gently I have treated even mine enemies, when I might have taken sharp revenge upon them. Surely, God will set these my good deeds against my present back-sliding and impurity ; and I may reckon myself, on the whole, in no such very dangerous spiritual condition."

Something of this sort, I apprehend, would have been David's way of judging himself, had he been no more sincere in his religion than many among us Christians are. But we see that, on the contrary, he felt as if he could not humble himself enough. It may be, that at first, before Nathan came to reprove him, he had quieted his conscience for a time with some such poor excuses as these : but when God had called to him by His prophet, all that was quite over ; his former piety and obedience was no comfort to him. How should it, when he considered that the Holy Spirit, by Whose gracious help only he ever could do any good thing, was now departed from his soul ; that is, that a separation was made betwixt him and his God ? The very light and life of his soul was gone : what consolation could it be to recollect that in former days it had been present ?

Now this deep and humiliating sense of the sad and bitter effects of sin, and of the loss of the comfort of God's Spirit, was not merely the feeling of a



moment, which passed quite away as time went on. It is plain from the remainder of king David's history, that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah hung heavy on his mind all the days of his life. To use a common way of speaking, he "never was the same man again." Thus when, according to God's threatenings, the judgement began to come upon him, and his own son was raised up against him; instead of bearing boldly up, as he had formerly against the persecutions of Saul, he went out of Jerusalem with his clothes rent and ashes upon his head, and all that he said and did shewed the very deepest dejection of mind. As when Shimei furiously cursed him, and others wanted to punish the affront, David would hear of no such thing, but said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." And the whole of his behaviour, when his son Absalom was slain, would seem to shew that his heart was yet full of remorse, and that he considered the whole thing his own doing, in that he had provoked God by his sins to bring the sword upon his house. In short, he made the right use of the grievous remembrance of his great sin. His conscience was the tenderer, as it seems, ever after, and his heart the more humble before God.

Which of these two, do you think, is the wisest and most comfortable way? To comfort ourselves, as the world does, after our backslidings, by remembering our former good deeds? or to acknowledge our faults, as David did, and to have our sins ever before us; to make God's mercy through Christ our only refuge, when our conscience tells us we have

sinned, and to be the tenderer, the more delicate, the more humble in heart and in all our conduct ever after ?

This is just asking, in other words, Which is more important, time or eternity ? Does it concern us more to be tolerably comfortable, easy and quiet in heart and mind, for the short time we are to live here on earth ; or to have a good chance, by God's mercy through Christ, of eternal happiness, when we come to die ? If you only want to quiet your conscience for the present, perhaps you are not so very unreasonable in thinking much of your past good conduct, and setting it against your sins, whatever they are ; but if you really wish to avoid everlasting torments, and to be happy with Christ for ever, and if the only way to be so, is to renounce yourself entirely and put your whole trust for salvation in His Cross, then surely you do most foolishly in not keeping your sins before you.

If there be, indeed, such places as heaven and hell, if we are, in real earnest, our very selves, to be happy or miserable, both soul and body, for ever, then certainly a light way of regarding our sins must be very dangerous. There is not, indeed, any part of the Gospel, with which such a temper can possibly be made to agree. Fallen creatures, conceived and born in sin, nourished up in a world which is condemned to be burned, some day, for its incorrigible wickedness ; bearing about them the sentence of death, the wages of their own and their fathers' transgressions ; and knowing that in them, as they are by nature, dwelleth no good thing ; how can it be suitable for such as these to be light-hearted, easy, and

as it were playful, in their judgement of their own faults? As if the mind and conduct which made our father Adam unfit to stay with God in Paradise, the mind which is accursed of God from the birth, the conduct which makes it necessary for the Almighty to withdraw the breath of life which He had Himself breathed into our nostrils, as if, I say, all these were no more than the freakishness and sport of children; not indeed to be praised, yet not worth any deep and serious repentance. It never can be right for a corrupt mortal man to make sport of corruption and mortality, or pass them by as things of course.

Especially considering the enemies you have to contend with. Our adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, is for ever ranging round the fold, seeking who is wandering, and whom he may devour. These sins of ours, which we treat as mere trifles, are the very things which he most rejoices to see; for he knows that they provoke God, drive away His Holy Spirit, put us out of His heavenly protection, and lay us open to the craft and malice of the powers of darkness. You cannot know at any moment, whether any sin that you commit be not the fruit of the evil spirit himself, invisibly tempting and prevailing against you. Yet you feel no particular remorse at having had him so very near you, and having listened to his evil enticements: it seems to you natural, a thing to be expected and borne with. Can the devil himself possibly wish for any thing to pass in your mind more likely to suit his purposes, and prepare you to be his slave, than this?

But further: the New Testament teaches the very



serious nature of our sins in the most awful way of all, by shewing us Christ crucified for them. These, which we think matters of sport, are in God's sight of such deep and fearful consequence, that He parted with His only-begotten Son, in order to make atonement for them. These lusts and passions and appetites of ours, these idle words and loose thoughts, which we account very tolerable frailties, cost the precious and innocent Blood of the only Man that ever lived pure from sin, the Blood of Him Who is God Incarnate, before God could forgive them. If you want to know what is the true nature of your sins, what sort of person you are yourself in God's eyes, do not judge by your own heart and conscience, nor by comparison with other men, nor by what your fellow-sinners say of you; but look up to the Cross of your Saviour, observe His wounds, His cries, His agony; endeavour to imagine what that guilt must be, which, being laid on Him as our Surety, caused Him, the Beloved Son, to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Fix your mind and heart there; use yourself to recollect very often, what Scripture tells us of those unspeakable pangs; pray to have more and more practical understanding of that great and saving Mystery; and you will, by God's grace, be soon ashamed to think lightly of your own sins. You will keep them ever before you, in order that you may never cease to feel grateful in heart to that love unutterable, which caused Him to endure such things for such vile and worthless persons.

When we feel deeply obliged to a friend, we do not readily excuse ourselves for past ingratitude or

unkindness towards him. If you feel that Christ is your best friend, your only Saviour and Redeemer, you will be slow to admit any thought of excusing yourself for your ill behaviour to Christ: you will be jealous of your own heart, and of the false good-nature of your friends, when they would furnish you with reasons and pretences for not dwelling much and sadly on past transgressions.

And this so much the more, as you may plainly see, that thinking lightly of the past is the very way to hinder you from real improvement in time to come. For observe what is sure to happen to any man who is not industrious in keeping his sins, as did David, ever before him. No doubt, whoever you are, you have very many secret faults; very many ways of thinking and acting, which flow from a wrong and corrupt principle, and which therefore displease the unerring Judge, though, for want of due suspicion of yourself, you do not yet know them to be wrong. How many are there, for example, who speak ill and judge unkindly of their neighbour, out of a lurking pride of heart, without in the least blaming themselves for it, or feeling as if they had acted wrong! Now, this may to them be as yet a secret fault: but if they go on in their present careless way, thinking much of their goodness and little of their sins, then this way of judging others will grow upon them more and more, and will become a presumptuous, habitual sin, drawing down God's severest judgement.

Again, let us suppose one of you far gone already in some habit which is plainly sinful; such for instance, as common swearing. He, perhaps, is become so accustomed to it, that the oaths and curses

come naturally out of his mouth, like the air that he breathes, without his knowing it. How is such a person as this ever to repent of his wretched and dangerous habit? Evidently by learning to think much of his sins; by fixing attention strongly on those parts of Holy Scripture, which are most apt to make him afraid. His sin may be as shocking, as notorious as possible, it may stare every one else as it were in the face, and yet be a kind of secret to himself; unless he really try and endeavour to judge his own misdoings in time, that he may not be judged of the Lord.

If you suppose the man's sin to be a very fashionable and common one, this will make the case still worse; for he will always have an excuse ready at hand to encourage him in passing lightly over it. "Why," will he say, "must I torment myself with watching against this sin, with repentance, and remorse, and consideration of God's judgement, every time I unhappily fall into it? I know it is a sin; but I know also that almost every one is guilty of it. Men remarkable for good-nature, greatly beloved by their acquaintance, very useful and benevolent men, are guilty of this sin: surely it must be a pardonable one." Is this a very uncommon way of thinking? Can it be otherwise than deadly to the soul of a Christian who indulges it? and would it not be at once cured, if we would be as scrupulous in blaming ourselves for what has been wrong, as we are busy in finding out grounds for praise for what has been right in our former conduct?

On the whole, it is plain that the wholesome sting of conscience will be dulled and deadened in that



man's mind, who refuses to think much of his sins. The warning voice of God's Holy Spirit will fall on his ear, faint and powerless. The very losses, and cares, and disappointments, which Divine Providence sends in great mercy to rouse and awaken us to better thoughts, will lose their effect upon him, because he has accustomed himself to take all things lightly. There is danger that God will quite leave off correcting; that He will take off His Hand, and leave that man to himself, as when He said concerning the incorrigible Jews, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." Nothing, to be sure, can be said worse, concerning men's way of refusing to attend to their own sins, than this: that it is the very way to make even the chastenings of the Almighty, the sicknesses and sorrows which He sends on them for their good, useless, and worse than useless, to them.

On the other hand, a tender conscience, a mind like David's, humbled, and resolved, on principle, never to shrink from the pain of looking at its own faults truly, such a mind as this is one of the greatest blessings, the most effectual means of improvement, which the Spirit of God bestows upon true Christians. Not to spare one's own faults, is the true, the manly, the practical way of looking at things: even if there were no express promise of Holy Scripture, one might be sure beforehand that it is the only way to improve.

Also, if you know at all what it is to love any one very dearly, you must know that the true love of God and of Christ will naturally make you very jealous over your own conduct towards them, and not

easily satisfied with your past ways of serving and honouring them. Look at a truly dutiful and affectionate child! Does he employ himself much in thinking how much he has done for his parent in times past, or is he not rather continually blaming himself for having forgotten this or that, for not having done his very best in every possible way for one whom he so tenderly regards and reverences? Where Christian love is sincere, it will cause you to have the same sort of feeling towards God Himself as your Father. Your faith and affection will, of course, shew itself by your being always discontented with what you have done, always begging pardon for not having done it better.

Then, consider what a great safeguard such a tender conscience as this would prove, to those who by God's blessing have not yet swerved, materially and wilfully, from their first baptismal innocence. What traveller is so secure against erring from his way, as he who is continually observing the road, and very much afraid of forgetting the marks which have been told him? Just so it fares with a young and tender-minded Christian, in danger of losing his way in the journey of life. Let him, by God's grace, accustom himself early, to have what the world would call a very nice and delicate conscience: let him, every night of his life, when he lies down to rest, think over the faults of that day: and let him not spare himself, but endeavour honestly to see those faults, as they are, and beg of God to shew them to him, in some measure, such as they appear to Him and His holy Angels. By thus keeping

your conscience active, you will prevent its growing hard and unfeeling, as it is otherwise sure to do. You will, by God's special grace, continue to be as much ashamed of a wanton word, or a burst of passion, as another man might be of adultery or open malice. You will preserve that greatest blessing, which those who have lost, sooner or later, would give the whole world to recal, the bright and fresh character of youth, before it is corrupted by mixing with an evil world.

But this, alas! is advice and encouragement, which comes too late for most hearers. The world is so very near us, even in our early youth, and our own nature so very frail and corrupt, that few indeed, in any congregation, can be supposed to have preserved their baptismal innocence. But so much the more need have they to acknowledge their faults, and keep their sin ever before them. So much the more need, to revive their lost tenderness of conscience, by earnest recollection of the many things in which they daily displease God, not only by doing, saying, and thinking what is against His commands, but also by leaving undone, unsaid, and unthought, what they know He approves of. Do you sadly and earnestly endeavour, thus to know the plague of your own heart, not only by general acknowledgments, or even occasional passionate feelings, that you and all men are miserable sinners, but much more by a sober and humble consciousness of your own particular faults and negligences? Thus God's Holy Spirit will accomplish for you, gradually, that great work, far above human power, of making your



hardened and seared conscience young, tender, and active again. And thus, what is above all, daily knowing more of yourself, that is to say, more of your sins, you will be daily brought nearer and nearer to Him Who alone can save sinners, taught to rely altogether on Him, and made to partake more and more of the pardon and holiness which is only to be found by the Cross.

## SERMON XIX.

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SIN, THE ONLY COMFORTABLE WAY.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. li. 3.

*“I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever  
before me.”*

It may seem, and, I doubt not, to most persons it has seemed before now, as if the continual recollection of one's sins, according to this example of David, and the plain advice of Holy Scripture, must make life very melancholy. And upon this, people easily persuade themselves that it could not be the intention of our good and merciful God, Who giveth us all things richly to enjoy, that we should pass our time here in penitential sorrow. Therefore they go on without scruple, determined to “let nothing daunt them,” to take all their own sins, and all the threatenings of Almighty God, easily and coolly; to amuse themselves while they live here, as if they were quite sure that all will turn out well for them in the end.

This plan, however, seldom or never answers, even with regard to the false peace of this present

evil world. If nothing else happens, their bodies decay, and that will not let their minds be easy. Cares, more or fewer, will come on: they do not go the right way to obtain God's Holy Spirit to assist in bearing them: and so they go on, grumbling and fretting, without any real and abiding comfort, and sink at last into their graves without any solid Christian hope.

How much happier those who will be persuaded, before it is too late, to take the advice of God and His Church, and daily judge themselves for their past sins, that they may not be judged of the Lord. Such persons, I say, take the only method to ensure themselves anything like true peace of conscience. It is true, to receive this saying at first requires some little faith. When we are told, that vexing ourselves on purpose for our transgressions is the way to be more peaceful and easy in mind, this sounds at first like a hard saying. But let a man have as much faith and trust in the great Physician of our souls, as we all of course have in those whom we consult for our bodily health, and the matter will be plain enough. Men do not scruple putting their bodies to some present pain and disorder, because they have faith in their advisers, that such application will make them easier bye and bye. Why will they not take God's word, as to the effect of a painful repentance in giving their souls ease and quiet? Let them only make the trial, steadily persisting, for some good while, in the practice of watching and rebuking themselves. They will find that God's Holy Spirit has an infinite number of ways of His own, ways which they never dreamed of, for quiet-



ing the truly contrite spirit, and teaching a kind of sober rejoicing in the Lord, even at the same time that men are humbled by the attentive remembrance of their own transgressions.

For when we bid a man, after David's example, to have his sin ever before him, it is not that we mean him to dwell on his sin *alone*, as sometimes men do when their minds and bodies are distempered, and they *wholly* swallowed up with a bitter feeling of remorse. That was not David's repentance: that is not Christian repentance. For when a man's heart, by God's grace, is truly touched with a sense of his sins, as committed against his Divine and merciful Saviour, he naturally seeks that Saviour in prayer, he looks to His gracious words in the Gospel, he anxiously enquires of His Church whether any way remains, and what is the best way he can take for shewing a better and more thankful mind. He looks in the Scripture as earnestly as a repenting child would look into a letter or message from his offended father: and what is the message which he finds there? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He looks in the Scripture, and what sort of examples does he find? Not perfect, spotless, angelical beings; but sinners, frail men like himself, who by the help of God's Holy Spirit, laid hold of His gracious pardon offered to them by His Son, recovered His favour, and saved their souls. To be sure, the remembrance of our past offences is of itself sad and painful enough: but that is not the question: we cannot avoid *that*; for come it will, sooner or later: but the question is,

Which would you rather, remember them when it is too late to cure them, or remember them while you have the Holy Scripture in your hands, the Church and the Sacraments within your reach, the noble examples of the saints and penitents of old still possible to be followed by you? It is painful enough in any case to be obliged to acknowledge that one has any grievous bodily distemper: but the fact being so, which would you prefer, to know it, and think of it in good time, or to wait till it was become quite incurable? Depend upon it, he who reads his Bible humbly and continually, *because* he has his sins ever before him, will find his Christian care and fear soon rewarded, even in the way of present peace and consolation. He will be often withdrawn from himself to contemplate the glorious and engaging patterns, which God's Book will shew him among God's people. It will be in some measure as if, in the midst of his remorse, he had had a visit from Abraham, or David, or S. Paul, or even from our Blessed Lord Himself. He will feel by degrees as all men, by God's grace, would feel in such holy society; not less sorry and ashamed of his sins, but more and more enabled to mix with his shame and sorrow steady resolutions of avoiding the same for the future, and assured hope, through God's assistance, of becoming really and practically better.

Above all, you must think much and often of your sins, if you would have true and solid comfort in thinking of the Cross of Christ. Those who do not know something of the misery to which they would have been left, if their justly offended God had passed them over; how can they ever be duly thankful for

His infinite condescension and mercy in dying for them? Is not this the very reason, why the great body of mankind care so very little for the Cross, namely, that they never seriously consider, what would have been their own lot without it? They do not in earnest acknowledge their faults; their sin is never before them, such as it is really: they only acknowledge in general that they are sinners, but hoping they are no worse than other people, they do not appear to themselves to need any particular redemption or relief. The consequence is, the glad tidings of the Gospel fall on their ears like a dead letter. They have been told indeed that Christ died for them, and that the Holy Spirit of God came down to prepare them for eternal life. But it seems to them a mere matter of course: they feel no particular need either of pardon or sanctification. If they would learn to be a little more serious: if they would open their eyes, and really look at their own ways compared with God's Word: if they would keep but one day's fair account of the hundreds and thousands of sins and negligences, by which they are daily offending their God: if they would but try to see how nearly they are treading on the brink of endless destruction: they could not surely be so indifferent to the doings and sufferings of the Son of God. But let them once understand their danger, let them be once duly humbled, and then, when they turn to the Cross, they will begin really to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is." Let them know how frail and weak they are, and they will a little comprehend, how inestimable the blessing of having an Almighty Friend near them, even the most Holy Spirit of



God, to support them in all dangers and strengthen them in all temptations. We see in the Communion Service, that in the Church's judgement no one is fit to partake of the Lord's Body, except he can say from his very heart, that "the remembrance of his sins is grievous unto him, and the burthen of them is intolerable." The greatest blessing in this world, the worthy participation of the Lord's Supper, is only to be had on that very condition, which inconsiderate persons think would be depriving life of all enjoyment; the remembrance and deep feeling of the woe and burthen of our sins.

Then let it be considered, that, by such grave thoughts of ourselves, we keep up a continual recollection of God's Presence; which, to be sure, to a helpless being, wanting support every moment, must be the greatest of all consolations. What I mean is this: take two persons equally exposed to the changes and chances of life, and let the chief difference of them be, that the one is used, on Christian principles, to examine himself, and judge and condemn himself for his own faults, daily, every evening of his life: the other to pass things over lightly, just as the generality of people do. Then let us suppose some sorrow or sickness, some great calamity, to fall upon both of them: which of the two will be best able to endure it? which will have most root in himself? The one, being used to try and judge himself, as in the presence of God Almighty, is used to think of Him as present. He may say as David did, "I have set God always before me, for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall." Come what will, therefore, the man of scrupulous tender consci-

ence, who acknowledges his faults, and keeps his sins ever before him, will know at once which way to look. His eye will turn immediately upwards, in humble acknowledgment that whatsoever his sorrow is, "he knows for certain that it is God's visitation." Bitter as his trial may be in many respects, it comes accompanied by this consolation, that it proves God not to have forsaken him. He is not left alone in the world. The affliction shews that his heavenly Father still thinks him worth chastening, still owns him as a son. "For what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not?"

These, I say, when affliction comes, are the natural thoughts of that man, who makes it his business to correct himself for his sins, and keep them always before him. But how is it with the other sort of person, the man who lets nothing alarm him? who passes lightly over every thing? What has he to cheer and support him, when his hour of affliction comes, as come it must, sooner or later, to all; and when his mere natural spirits flag, and he is thrown back upon his own thoughts for comfort? Must he not feel in a great measure without hope, inasmuch as he has in a great measure lived without God in the world? He has not been used to place himself from time to time before the throne of his Judge; to pour out his heart before Him; to confess all his sins to a merciful and all-knowing Father. Of course, then, it is strange to him, and out of his way, to seek for refuge, and shelter, and relief, in the ever-open arms of the same indulgent Father. He is like a ship in the wide sea, tossed about without knowing which way the haven lies. But if, sensible of his

own weakness and peril, he had been used continually to watch his own transgressions, and not to let things pass away as in a dream, then he would be like the same ship, caught indeed in a storm, but guided by a careful pilot, who had watched, and not lost his reckoning, and was aware what course to take.

In another way, the remembrance of our sin and unworthiness may help us against worldly care and anxiety. If we have it deep at heart, it will make us very resigned, and ready to bow with submission to the will of our chastening Father, as being thoroughly convinced that we have indeed deserved much worse, and humbly hoping to be so weaned from our bad ways, and to learn so much patience by our trials in this present world, as may prepare us, by Divine grace, to be received into rest and glory hereafter. According to the saying in the book of Lamentations: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" and to that other saying in the prophet Micah, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

By the same rule, much thought of our own unworthiness, and of the spiritual danger we are in, will make us very indifferent to worldly things: as those well know, who have at any time felt more than usually dejected on recollecting their many provocations against their Maker, and considering what must become of them, should He call them before they have truly repented. When such thoughts are strong on a man's mind, he loses his relish for the things which are accounted the chief prizes of this world. It is



nothing to him, whether he is rich or great; he is swallowed up with the awful meditation, what is to become of his soul for ever. This, which has been most men's feeling occasionally, would be every man's feeling by regular habit, if he would regularly reprove himself for his faults, and endeavour to see them as the holy Angels do. Now, who does not see that whatever takes him off from worldly cares and anxieties, would be so much added to the quiet and comfort of his life? Who would not bear the pain, which strictly watching his own sins must occasion, for the sake of that calmness and evenness of mind which good Christians enjoy, because, by God's grace, they have but one great care, but one thing much at heart, namely the saving of their souls; and by the same grace they are in a fair way to make sure of that for ever? Certainly such unity and steadfastness of purpose, such constancy and tranquillity of heart, such freedom from the wild childish passions, which distract the impenitent and unrenewed heart ten thousand ways at once, certainly these are great blessings, even here in this present life. And these are only to be obtained by those who will consent to have their hearts thoroughly humbled, by the constant watching of their own transgressions and backslidings.

Then, when God's Spirit has thus taught men to believe themselves to be unworthy persons heartily, which is indeed a much harder lesson than we can understand, till we have thoroughly tried, but, when we have heartily learned our own unworthiness, the lessons to be learned from the sufferings of our Blessed Saviour will sink the deeper into our hearts; we shall

be ashamed to murmur at any of our light affliction which is but for a moment, considering what He endured Who was without spot and blemish, "purer than an Angel, and brighter than the morning star." Supposing that we are reproached, that will come into our minds which our Lord Himself hinted to His disciples: "If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household!" A truly humble person will even be alarmed, if he find himself going on for any length of time without God's fatherly chastisements. He will fear lest, for some sin of his, God does not think him worthy "to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities troubles and sicknesses." So much the more contentedly, and even thankfully, will he bear such trials when they come, however grievous to flesh and blood, being now sure that God means him good, since He has given him an opportunity of being conformed to the image of His Son.

Also, when we are speaking of confession, another thing is much to be considered, the relief which God has provided for sick souls, by inviting and encouraging them to confess their sins to their brethren; not to any of their brethren, but to those whom He has called from among the rest to be His ministers, partly for this very purpose, that they may receive private confession, and administer private Absolution, in His Name. As it was, no doubt, a great relief to the unhappy lepers among the Jews, that they were to come to the priest, and tell him all, and he was to judge of their case, and use all gentleness and discretion towards them: so if we would oftener follow the advice and direction of our Church, and

lay open our conscience to the priest, when we find it troubled with any weighty matter, it could not fail greatly to relieve us, and help towards the cure of our sick souls. The pain and shame itself of confessing would, doubtless, in many cases be very great; but if borne patiently for Christ's sake, it would do good as other tribulations do, besides the secret and mysterious blessing which our Lord has joined to the right use of all His holy Church ordinances. Then as the leper would feel sure consolation, on being told by the priest that his leprosy was really cleansed, the hand of God taken off, and he free to enter into God's sanctuary again: so who can say what comfort and strength it might give any of us Christians now, if, having a burdened conscience, he were to open his grief to the priest with entire humility and truth, and if having obediently followed good advice, and shewn good signs of true and enduring repentance, he should hear the gracious words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins," spoken to him with authority by one of those to whom our Lord Himself said, "Whose sins ye forgive, they are forgiven?"

Surely in such an one, according to the measure of his sincerity, the gracious Psalm would be accomplished, not only "While I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining: Thy hand was heavy upon me day and night," but also "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin." Thus speaks David, who had confessed his sins, not to God only, but also to God's prophet: and so he found absolution and re-



lief. Though he still bore about him, sad and heavy, the remembrance of what he had done; though the mark continued upon him, yet he had comfort and assured hope, in knowing that God had so far put away his sin, that he was not to die for it: he was in a way to be quite cured at last, if he would but persist in his humble remembrance of his sin, and in true obedience, till his trial was over.

On the whole, is not the point made clear, which at first may sound strange to the inconsiderate, namely, that continual remembrance of your sins, according to the advice and example of David, is the only way to have tolerable peace of mind? For this will lead you to Holy Scripture, and to the great and noble examples there. This will lead you to the foot of the Cross, will set you upon seeking God's Holy Spirit by confession and absolution, by His Sacraments and by untiring prayer. This will keep it ever in your heart, that God is present observing your ways. Worldly cares and worldly fears will pass away like light clouds over your mind, when the serious thought of your sin and danger has become habitual to you. You will be braced up to endure sorrow, knowing that it is fully deserved; and whilst with all thankfulness you receive the thousand blessings, the least of which you know is greater than the best of your merits, you will be continually humbled and sobered by the remembrance of what He suffered, Who never deserved any ill. And thus, not being highminded, but fearing, you will make every day's remembrance of your past sins a step towards that eternal peace, in which there will be no need of watching against sin any more.

## SERMON XX.

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### THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ISA. lxiiv. 4.

*“Since the beginning of the world men have not seen, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.”*

“God hath prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man’s understanding.” So the Church acknowledges in the collect for this day, having learnt it of the prophet Isaiah, as interpreted by the Apostle S. Paul. For S. Paul, explaining to the Corinthians how impossible it was for a bad and earthly-minded person so much as to form a notion of the blessings of the Gospel, puts them in mind, how the same warning had been given by Isaiah long before. “As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit.” There is indeed a little difference in sound, between the words which Isaiah wrote, and those which S. Paul here rehearses; but

in meaning both come to the same. Isaiah for instance had prophesied, that the wonders of the Gospel would be greater than had been perceived by the ear or seen by the eye; S. Paul adds, that neither had the like entered into the heart of man: Isaiah says, none have seen or heard beside Thee, i. e., without Thy special grace; S. Paul says, God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit: Isaiah says, the good things are prepared for him that waiteth on God; S. Paul, that they are prepared for them that love Him.

The Gospel, you see, heightens all things, and makes them more blessed, as it comes itself to be better known. When the time came, it was found that its good things were not only beyond eye and ear, but beyond thought: its grace was not merely God's help, but the Holy Spirit actually abiding in men: it invited men not merely to wait for our Lord, but to love Him. In short, both the Prophet and the Apostle speak to us of the joys of heaven: not simply as of deep secrets, to be made known only in heaven, but as of blessings which are to begin here, dimly and in much mystery, seen through a glass darkly: and then are to go on, if we cast them not away, through endless ages, becoming more and more abundant in light and peace and joy.

Thus, consider the great mystery, on which the whole of our Christian being depends: consider the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour; first, as He did reveal Himself; then, as He will reveal Himself in heaven. Eye had not seen such a sight as God made Man dwelling on earth, His pure and spotless Birth of His holy Virgin Mother, His abode in the manger,



His quiet dwelling in Nazareth : and afterwards the wonders of His Ministry, until the hour of His Death and Resurrection and Ascension : from beginning to end, each moment of every day and night that He staid upon earth, it was more, infinitely more, than eye had ever yet seen. For it was God Himself, there visible to the eyes of His creatures. His Countenance, sleeping or awake, was the Countenance of God. His looks were the looks of the great Creator and Judge, signifying how He was pleased or displeased with His creatures. It was God Who turned and looked on Peter ; God, Who beholding the young man, loved him ; God, Who looked round upon the Scribes and Pharisees with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts. If it were only this one circumstance, God dwelling on earth visibly and conversing with men, and revealing, by look or gesture, His divine favour or displeasure, even this surely was enough to make the Gospel and kingdom of our Lord such as no eye had seen since the beginning of the world.

But this world of wonders did not end with our Lord's departure out of men's sight. The Holy Ghost came down, to make the Apostles and other Christians, members of Christ : and so to the astonishing mystery of God, made Man, was added the other no less astonishing, of sinners new-born and made partakers of the Divine Nature. Then might be seen frail and deceivable persons, born with the same passions as we are, giving up all that they had, cheerfully taking the lowest place, making God's service and the spreading of His kingdom, and the waiting on His poor and afflicted, the whole employ-

ment of their lives. Then, when you walked out in the streets of Jerusalem, you might see such sights as the following: signs and wonders wrought by the hands of the Apostles among the people: all Christians with one accord in one place: believers more and more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women: sick men brought out into the streets, and laid upon beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them: diseased and possessed persons brought to Jerusalem out of all the neighbouring towns, and healed by the Apostles in the name of Jesus Christ: and lastly, the doers of these good deeds, when they were persecuted for it, only lifting up their voice with one accord, in prayer for their enemies and thanksgiving for their own sufferings, and growing the more earnest in all the work of Christ. Never, since the world began, had such things been seen upon earth. But they are nothing to the greater and more blessed things in heaven, prepared in the end for them that love God. Let us call to mind a few, a very few, of these heavenly blessings, such as we may hope, even in the body, to be one day partakers of.

Were the eyes of the Apostles and first disciples blessed, because they saw our Lord and Saviour here on earth, after the flesh? Remember what is promised in the Creed and in the Scriptures. Your bodies shall rise again, and with them you will again receive your sight, only in far greater perfection than you have it here: and Whom will you look upon? What Countenance shall you behold, clearer than the sun, gazing upon you? Whom but that

same Lord and Saviour returning and shewing Himself to you in His eternal and glorious Body? For, we read, every eye shall see Him: they that pierced and crucified Him by their sins, as well as they who loved and obeyed Him. But let us now think of the happier sort only: let us consider and turn it well in our minds, what a mercy is prepared by the Almighty for them that love Him, that they shall see their Redeemer face to face: shall see His Divine Countenance turned towards them, not in anger, not in sorrow, not in grief for the hardness of their hearts, but in entire unspeakable love, approbation, and satisfaction. As long as we stay here in this world, what one thing is there to be seen, so full of joy and comfort, as when we are permitted to behold the face of some dear and affectionate friend, looking on us with contentment and satisfaction, full of that love and kindness which we know to be in his heart, and feel certain that it will never fail us? And this is not the less deeply felt, but in some sort even the more deeply, if we feel that we have deserved no such merciful looks: that the love which is shewn towards us is *forgiving* love: as when that prodigal son, returning, first met his Father's eye, and perceived in a moment, as no doubt he might before a single word was spoken, that there was love and pardon in store for him, though he had forfeited all claim to it: what unspeakable comfort is there for the wounded soul to feed upon, in the remembrance of such looks as that! May not this help us in part to imagine, how the glorious yet gracious Countenance of our Lord and Redeemer, turned upon such as we are (should we prove so happy) in the Last



Day, with the words, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," how that one loving beam of His fatherly aspect may abide with us for ever, to make us happier and happier? and how the sense of being forgiven may enter into that happiness, and make a great part of the sweetness of it as no doubt it will be felt by every child of Adam who shall be saved, more keenly as he feels his sin more deeply and humbly? Then, if it was a thing we never can properly imagine, to behold our lowly Saviour's countenance, and to mark His steps, as He went about doing good in the days of His flesh, and here in His earthly task, how much more beyond our imagination is what the Apostles and Prophets tell us of Him, there on high in His glorious Majesty: that we shall behold His Face, as the sun shineth in his strength: that He shall be seen in the midst of the Throne, as a Lamb that had been slain: the tokens of His Passion, the marks of His awful Wounds, will appear even in His glory: He shall feed His people, and lead them to living fountains of waters: the Lord God and the Lamb shall be their light, wherever they move or abide in the Holy City. They shall see Jesus Christ in His glory, shall see Him with their eyes; His Presence will be all in all to them.

Again, if it was joy to the Christians of Jerusalem to behold the Apostles and martyrs and other saints, what shall we say to the glorious hope which Holy Scripture holds out to us, of beholding them one day on their glorious thrones in heaven: seeing with our own eyes the blessed Virgin Mother of our Lord, the choirs of Angels and Archangels, the holy S. John

Baptist, the favoured Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul ; and all the rest whom Christ vouchsafes to call Friends, beholding them face to face, knowing them one from another, and humbly admiring their blessed obedience and order, as all of them, like stars differing in glory, keep their ordained places around the throne of God.

These are some of the sights of heaven, dimly shadowed by the holy Church here on earth, especially in her first beginnings. Now let us reflect on the following words of the prophet : Ear hath not heard the like : it hath not been perceived by the ear. Never on earth had ear heard such sounds as fell from the lips of the Son of God, when He walked as a Man among men. "All bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." "Full of grace were His lips, because God had blessed Him for ever." Think for a moment of the seven most merciful sayings, which fell from Him on the very Cross : or of His blessings and salutations after His Resurrection : especially think, when He said such a word as, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," how it must have sunk into a sinner's heart. But even those sounds were nothing to be compared to those that shall meet the ear, when those that love God are permitted to hear their Saviour's voice again. Thrilling and all-comforting as they were, the hearing of them was not like what we may suppose it will be to hear, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Not that the words of our God, when abiding upon earth, had any weakness or imperfection in them. God forbid ! But that the ears of men were not prepared to receive them,

as the ears of the saints will be prepared to receive that final blessing and absolution.

So again, if the services of the holy Church, her prayers and confessions and psalms and thanksgivings, have ever been the joy of holy persons on earth, far surpassing anything that had been heard, even from Moses or David, before our Lord Christ came: ten thousand times more will the songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the everlasting Halleluiahs around the throne, go beyond all the very best that the piety and skill of all saints on earth can attain to. Meditate but for one instant on such a description as this in the book of Revelation, "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a new song before the throne. And, they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And, "I heard the voice of many Angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Finally, whereas the Apostle says, "neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him:" we may know and perceive how, even in this world, the Sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross, God the Son dying for sinners, was and is a most inconceivable mystery, a depth of love and wonder, which only seems to grow deeper, the longer and more earnestly one tries to gaze upon it. None had thought of such things



before; it had not entered into the heart of man, except in very dim shadow, and here and there, perhaps, by express revelation to some highly favoured person. Yet now it is known and familiar to every child that can say the Belief, familiar at least in word, and in some sort of fancy: alas! that we do not more earnestly turn our hearts to it.

So again, as to the mode of applying this great Sacrifice to each one of us. Who could have imagined beforehand that this Man, Who is God, would give us His Flesh to eat: that we should live by Him, as He by the Eternal Father? Here are things, a few out of many, which "had not entered into the heart of man, but now God hath revealed them by His Spirit to them that love Him."

"He hath revealed them," i. e. He hath taught us for certain, that this is the way of salvation: but *how*, He hath not yet taught us. As yet even the very Angels desire to come nearer and look more closely into these things: how much more must we as yet see them but as in a glass darkly! But from the difference between the knowledge of the simplest Christian now and the wisest before Christ came, we may judge a little of the far more immeasurable difference between that which we know here and that which we shall know in heaven: when the poor humble untaught Christian, who perhaps could not read here, but who did his best to keep the commands and to suffer patiently for Christ's sake, shall see the Father and the Son, shall perceive the meaning of God's deep providential ways, shall see all things clearly and brightly, without misgiving and without any anxious fear, by the light of God's Countenance,

on which he will be permitted to gaze for ever and ever.

My brethren, these are God's promises, these are some of the things which He has prepared in heaven for us. So far there is no doubt: His Word is given: it is true, and endureth for ever. These good things, which pass man's understanding, are prepared in heaven for us: but are we on earth preparing ourselves for them? There is but one way of doing so: it is, that we should be learning to love God. If we love God, of course we desire to be with Him: we feed upon the blessed hope which He has given us, of seeing Him one day face to face, and never, never being parted from Him. How many of us can truly say that so it is with us in regard of our God and Saviour? that our first and best thoughts are of Him? that we study to be with Him all the day long? that we are never so happy as when we feel that we are in some manner drawing near Him? What reason have we to think that the holy Angels as they watch over us say one to another, behold, here are persons who really turn their minds to the great and good things prepared for them? May we not rather fear that their thought is, "What sort of men, women and children are these? these wonders are prepared for them, and they know it, and yet they suffer their heart to be filled, day after day, with the trifles of their own little world. God has died for them, and they will not love Him. They really care more in their hearts about half a day's diversion, or a little profit in a bargain, than they care about seeing their Saviour in heaven. They *must* care more about it, for they think a great deal more of

it. What can be done for such people? how will it be with them in their latter end?"

If we have but too much reason to fear, that the blessed inhabitants of heaven, looking down on us, may find us thus perverse in our ways, O let us, one and all, wake up ere it be too late. Let us open our eyes and our ears to the great things which God hath done for us, to His awful and loving words, which are sounding around us. Let us at least give our attention to the words which we ourselves say daily, to the Lord's Prayer and the Belief. We cannot do so, without feeling in our hearts that we ought to love God above all things. Must we not desire so to love Him? would we not wish to do so? Then let us beseech Him earnestly to pour that love into our hearts. Let us strive, and ask His help, to turn from all mean and shameful ways, such as now lead us astray from Him. Once let us have learned so to love Him, as to desire His blessed Presence continually, and all will be well with us, both in time and in Eternity.



## SERMON XXI.

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THIS LIFE, 'GOD'S SCHOOL OF LOVE.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 S. JOHN iv. 7.

*“Love is of God.”*

THE Church, in her collect for this week, turns our attention to that greatest grace of Love. She puts us in mind of the good things in heaven, which pass man's understanding, and of the certain and most serious truth, that God hath prepared them for none but those who love Him. She teaches us to pray that He would pour His Love into our hearts, such Love, as according to His unspeakable mercy, may qualify us to obtain those infinite and eternal blessings.

You see that here are two works of preparation spoken of, and both of them divine works. God only can prepare and provide the bliss of heaven for any of His creatures: *that* is very plain, for all the whole heavens are the Lord's: all the many mansions of that blessed Home are at His sole disposal: neither man nor angel can have any portion in the light, and life, and love of those pure regions, other than He, their Father and King, shall appoint unto

them. Thus God hath prepared good things for them that love Him. But there is also another preparation which the collect speaks of. He prepares the hearts of His reasonable creatures for those good things by teaching them to love Him, as the collect goes on to beseech Him, "Pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises which exceed all that we can desire." He prepares the blessings for us; *that* we very well understand: and He also prepares us for the blessings; which we do not generally I fear, so well understand.

For concerning those unspeakable joys, would it not appear, that something like what follows would be too true an account of the mind and feelings of the greater part of us? We believe in heaven, in the life everlasting; we cannot help believing it; it is part of our creed, part of "the word which we have heard from the beginning." We believe that there is such a place as heaven, a place where "God Himself shall be with men; wiping away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." We believe that there is such a place, and probably there is not one among us but has at least a dim hope and wish to go there. But may there not be too many, who, in their ignorance, think of heaven and salvation as a kind of chance thing, a lot which will fall to some, and not to others, nobody can tell why or how; and so, all the difference their belief in heaven makes to them is that, when they think of it they had rather go there than not, and that they sometimes comfort themselves in the troubles of this

world with hoping that it may all be made up to them in the next? Too many, again, appear to think that the Almighty Master and Owner of heaven will give or deny it, not according to our behaviour, but according to some rule, secret to us: so that if a man can but turn to Christ with a kind of sanguine feeling at the last, it will be well with him, what life soever he has led. Few in comparison seem heartily to receive the real truth about heaven, and steadily to keep to it. And what is the real truth about heaven, witnessed from beginning to end in the Holy Book of Him Who came down from heaven? Surely it is this: that He Who hath prepared heaven for us will also to prepare us for heaven by a certain course of education and discipline, which He means to be going on, the whole time we are in His earthly kingdom, the whole time from our Baptism to our death. He has given us all a natural yearning, which we cannot help feeling, though perhaps many of us may never yet have thought of it, after something greater and better, more perfect and more enduring, than any of the things which we know here in the way of earthly sense and experience. The very child in the cradle reaches after something which far passes its own understanding. And what is that something? It is Love. The child yearns after the loving care of its mother: it feels, though it knows not why, that it cannot be happy without her. It feels for her, clings to her, very soon distinguishes between her and all others. Why? Because its God so instructs it. It is the first lesson the little one receives in that trusting love, which is to prepare it for Eternity. As the mother's love for the babe is the first faint image



of the tender love of our Maker towards us, receiving us unto His arms as soon as we are born, so our first faint beginnings in love are as the young babe's earliest efforts to reach and feel after its mother. Daily and hourly, as the infant grows older, it becomes more aware of its parent's ever-watchful love, and is trained more and more in loving the parent in return. By and by, as the child grows older, it very likely becomes aware of brothers and sisters: and here again is a second lesson of love. The brothers and sisters are so many beings, for whom and with whom the little one learns by degrees to feel tenderly, towards whom it may practise tender loving trust, if they be older than itself; if younger, tender, loving care and affection. By degrees the circle grows wider, and the friends and neighbours of the family, the child's own companions and school-fellows, one after another, find a place in its heart: and every fresh bond of that sort, if well improved, helps to train it in love. And almost before men are aware, the child is turned into a man or woman, and if Providence so ordain, it has its portion in that state which, for the tenderness of the love belonging to it, Holy Scripture compares to the union betwixt Christ and His Church. Holy Matrimony, if anything on earth, is intended surely to cherish and improve us in love. And then, what an exercise of love is that, which God has put into the heart of fathers and mothers towards their children, and again, if so it please Him, to their children's children: day and night passed in affectionate waiting upon them, in watching over them, in praying for them, and still the love is not satisfied, it never seems to itself to

have done enough. Who can doubt that all this is ordered by the providence of the great and good Father of all, as a continual set of lessons in the school of heavenly love: "turning the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers," and also the hearts of husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and companions towards each other, as a preparation for turning and drawing all to Himself. And even where, as sometimes is the case, the providence of God has not granted these endearing relations, or has taken the exercise of them out of our reach, still He leaves free to us all the practice of mercy, patience, considerate kindness towards all who come in our way. We may be doing or contriving good, or receiving good, or bearing evil patiently, every day and every hour of our lives. And all these are exercises of love; all these, if we do not of ourselves hinder it, tell something towards preparing us for heaven.

Now then let it be well observed, I would have it, if possible, thought on by every one of us, I would have it sink deep into every one of our hearts, that none of all these feelings of love cometh in the first place of a person's own will and fancy. We cannot make ourselves love by merely wishing and being minded to do so. Why do parents love their children and children their parents? Not because they choose to do so, but because God puts it into their hearts. Thus even in respect of the first earthly beginnings and rudiments, the alphabet, as one may call it, of love, we see how truly the Apostle spake, when he said, "Love is of God." Observe, it is S. John who says this, the beloved and loving disciple, the great

Apostle and teacher of love. "Love is of God;" it is a fire which must be lighted from above: if any man have let it go out, it is not within his own power to rekindle it.

And if this be so in respect of these earthly affections, which, as we have seen, are but the shadow and faint image of heavenly things, as children's sports are the shadow and image of the businesses which occupy grown men, how much more evidently true is it, that the Divine Love itself which is the very substance, and, as it were, heaven itself on earth, will not come of itself, cannot be obtained by our own endeavours, nor felt and exercised at our own will, but that it must and can only be a direct gift of the Blessed Spirit of God, "drawing our heart upward towards holy and heavenly things." If the first motions of love toward their mother, felt by little infants, are breathed into them directly from above, much more may we be quite sure, that the first voluntary turning towards God, the first act of conversion, so to call it, when the young heart begins to go out of itself, and to lift up itself towards its Maker and its Saviour, *this* must be purely and entirely God's doing; not at all ours, except so far as that we, by the grace given us in Holy Baptism, do not resist it nor turn away from the light. It is not of us, but it is of God, preventing, that is, going before us, that we may have a good will. My brethren, it is a serious question, but really it is a question which we ought every one of us to ask himself, How stands it with us, with you and me, in regard of this our first lesson in the school of heavenly love? Did we learn it or not, when He graciously offered to teach it us? Most



of us, I trust, may remember something of the kind. At least, I should be sorry to think that any one here had suffered the world and sin to obtain such entire dominion over him, as that he should have entirely forgotten the early stirrings of the heart, by which God called him long ago, and offered to awaken the baptismal grace within him. We may not perhaps remember the exact times and ways, but we can hardly help being conscious that God has, at some time or in some way, been working in our hearts, and making us wish to be good and to save our souls. And there may be some who remember more distinctly, how, after long months or years of sin or indifference on their part, the Merciful One interfered, suddenly or by degrees, to save them : how thoughts of God, thoughts of their own souls, thoughts of death and judgement, of heaven and hell, thoughts of Christ dying on the Cross for them, and of His Holy Spirit given unto them in Baptism, and too much, alas ! slighted in their past life ; we may remember, I say, how these thoughts came over us, we knew not how, nor from where, and engaged us, so that we could not be easy in giving ourselves up to other things ; and so it may be, that the beginning was made of a great and happy change, a return to Him from Whom we had deeply revolted, a new heart and a new spirit, Christian love instead of earthly selfishness and impurity. Now this again, this *penitent* love, as well as the first awakening love of those who have been baptized and have never fallen away, this also is of God ; it is a special token of His Presence, and no one who thinks on it, either in himself or in others, ought to think on it without

the deepest reverence and awe, the deepest fear, lest the soul so favoured should after all forget Him and fall away.

There are times again, when those who try to be dutiful learners in Christ's school of love, which is His Church, feel themselves, in drawing near to His Sacraments which are most especial lessons of love, more than usually lifted up with loving thankfulness, or cast down with loving contrition, in His gracious Presence. Often they have felt dull and dry, and have gone away, it may be in fear, that they had missed the blessing: but at times it has seemed otherwise, a light has shone in the dark place of their hearts; and whereas before Holy Communion all had seemed more or less dreary, after It, He Whom they had received by faith permitted them to rejoice in His holy comfort; they knew not how, but they could not doubt that it was He. They could not doubt it, when they found themselves afterwards the stronger to resist temptation, and to do good works. This love also was of God, and of God only: who can doubt it? It came not of the outward sign, but of the thing signified, i. e. Christ communicating Himself through that outward sign. If it were slighted, if we fell away, it was, in each instance, a lesson, a divine lesson, in heavenly love, thrown away, and not to be recovered but by very special penitence.

Yet once more. There are moments in the lives of God's servants, apart from all sensible connexion with outward Sacraments, when it is put into their hearts to love and to do good more and more courageously than common; or when unusual power seems given them to suffer and suffer on with untiring

patience : bearing and enduring all things for Christ's sake : increasing in sweetness and devoutness of heart, as more and more of the Cross is laid upon them. I mean such doings as when the holy S. Barnabas sold all that he had and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet : and when, as we read often in Church history, tender mothers encouraged their children to bear all deadliest pains with joy and thankfulness for Christ's sake : or when, as even now from time to time happens, Christian people find it in their hearts willingly to give up some or all of what they hold dearest in the world, and to embrace what is most painful, rather than deny Christ, or break His law. Concerning all these brighter spots in the lives of God's people, no man can doubt that the light which rests on them is more especially light from heaven : it is not earthly, it bears no tinge of this earth : the love which causes men to give up all comes only from the Fountain of Love.

Thus then, from beginning to end, it is plain that the life of Christians in this world is meant to be one continued school, and, as it were, course of education, to prepare and bring us up for loving Christ perfectly in heaven. And, O my brethren, if there is such sweetness as no doubt we all of us know more or less of in the several stages of this our earthly training : if there be such unutterable delight in the love which passes between parents and children, husbands and wives, friends and companions, givers and receivers of charity here in this world : if there be such pure sweetness and comfort in the little touches and tastes of Divine Love, bestowed on us from time to time, as members of Christ ; in our first



turning to God, in our penitential yearnings, in our sacramental Communion, in our reachings after perfection, how can we ever think enough of that to which it is all tending, the overflowing sea of heavenly charity, whereof these are but as drops? What can we do, but bow the knees of our hearts, and hold our breath, as it were, to listen, while the Divine voice is telling us, "Love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; For God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." All the true love that is in any of God's servants, whether here in the place of preparation, or there in the place of perfection, all is of God, and returns to God; we could not bestow it on ourselves, we may not pretend to keep it for ourselves.

We could not of ourselves have lit up the fire of holy love in our hearts: but too surely we may quench it of ourselves, or reject the merciful hand which would light it for us. We cannot, we never could, save ourselves, but we may ruin ourselves if we will. Joined as we are to our Blessed Saviour, God Incarnate, by His regenerating grace in Baptism, and made, once for all, members of His mystical Body the Church, there is but one thing that can hinder us from loving God, and being saved by His love; and that will, if we shut our hearts against it, as we shall do, if we permit ourselves to be in any respect selfish or worldly; for selfish and worldly fancies, so far as they are indulged, turn love into impurity. Why, even on earth, where selfishness is, and worldly desire, there is no true love. A mother's love for her babe is true love, because it is not at all

selfish ; she cares not what she gives up to wait on her child ; much less can there be any selfishness in the love which is to prepare us for heaven. This then is our part, by prayer beforehand, and endeavour at the time, in all things, little and great, not to please ourselves, but our Saviour, and our brethren for our Saviour's sake. This must be our way of working with the Holy Spirit, in the great work of preparing our hearts to receive the good things which He hath provided for us. If we thus strive to empty our hearts of selfishness, He will come down and fill them with His heavenly love. Quietly, soberly, gradually, yet most effectually, He will turn our whole life into a school of divine charity : from our first little self-denials in childhood, to that love, strong as death, which would make us, like the holy martyrs, glorify our Lord, if need were, in the very fires. Thus, living and dying in love, we shall never die, but live in Christ for ever. And every moment either brings us nearer to this, or takes us further from it, according as we spend that moment in pleasing ourselves or in pleasing God. May we take this thought home with us, and may the remembrance of it be a joy to us, and not a grief, in that day when we are *sure*, all of us, to meet again.

## SERMON XXII.

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### HOW TO RECEIVE THE JUDGEMENTS OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

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SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 SAM. xxiv. 17.

*“And David spake unto the Lord, when he saw the Angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father’s house.”*

THE word Judgement, used by us when we speak of afflictions sent on people to punish sins, is surely a very awful word. It is as much as to say, that these troubles, which in one sense are very light and but for a moment, are in another sense exceeding heavy, inasmuch as they are little tokens and glimpses of what will come hereafter, if people do not repent: just as a mere angry look from a loving father is a serious matter to a child who has any fear and love in his heart, from a feeling which he has, that he never could bear it, were his father to look on him so always. In this sense even the lighter troubles of life, an aching limb, a slight sickness, a passing disagreement with a friend, and the like,



are serious matters to a thoughtful Christian, viz. as being tokens and samples of miseries of the like kind, only far more intolerable and continuing through all eternity, prepared for such as die in their sins. Much more plainly may the same thing be said of the open and signal judgements of God, His sore judgements upon guilty cities, kingdoms and generations of men, such as "the sword, the famine and the pestilence," so often mentioned in the Prophets. If lesser troubles are warnings of the Day of Judgement, so much more are these: especially as the Judge Himself has told us before, that such things will come to pass, and be signs of His Coming and of the end of the world. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, and there shall be famines and pestilences."

The afflictions then and troubles, which God sends on nations and on kingdoms, are especial warnings of the Last Day: and like all warnings, they put us sharply to the proof: they are a sort of turning-points in our lives: they fix our place, for good or evil, according as we use them, more positively than before: if we are not the better for them, we are a great deal the worse. And it must be a sight to make the Angels wonder, when they look down and see how differently different persons behave under the very same judgement. Suppose the Almighty should now bring upon us of this nation one or more of the great calamities, which for some time we have more or less dreaded: suppose this present harvest should prove a bad one, not only here but in other countries, and so there should be a famine in the land: or suppose that fearful disease, the cholera,

which was among us some years since, and is even now said to be advancing towards us from the East, should begin to rage violently in our streets : or suppose the Almighty should strike us far and near with the sword of some cruel enemy, or in our own country should set every man's hand against his brother, as it has been before now : we can tell beforehand, how very differently different persons would behave themselves under such judgements. Some, we may fear, would take it all in a reckless, unbelieving way. As long as the calamity touched them not, they would not even tremble at it : they would go on in their mere earthly ways, eating and drinking, buying and selling, enjoying or enriching themselves while they could, until the scourge should come suddenly on and strike them down in a moment. If the fear of God, and sense of His Presence, knocked sometimes at the door of their heart, they would quiet it with thinking, " We are no worse than others : many have escaped before now, and so, we dare to say, shall we : we will not let ourselves be daunted." Others, we may suppose, would despond at once : they would be quite beaten down, the moment the evil came close to them : their hearts would die within them and become as a stone : so overwhelmed, so stupified with the sense of the present grief, that they would not know what to do, nor which way to look : and too likely it is, that, for want of use, many of them would be unable effectually to recover themselves and look in earnest towards God. Which of us can be sure, that something like this would not be his own case on the out-break of any such sudden evil ? and how in the

world can we prepare against it, except by using ourselves in good time beforehand to turn at once to God in all changes, little and great. If we so feel after Him in the twilight, be sure He will not be far from us in the dark: His grace will prepare us always for what His providence shall bring forth, and will enable us to deal with it rightly, when it is come. As the devout Psalmist says, We shall not shrink from His judgements, because we shall know that He is teaching us.

For, lastly, there will be some again, who will take such evil times, should they come on, in a *penitent* way: i. e. in the only right way: taking the blame to themselves, and humbly endeavouring to be the better for all that happens. David is our great example and pattern, as of the whole duty of penitence, so also of this part of it, the right use of God's awful judgements. I speak now especially of his behaviour when the plague came on, as you heard in the first lesson.

First of all, his conscience was tender beforehand. He had not lost the deep sense of his own natural sinfulness, and of God's exceeding mercy, which Almighty grace had given him, when he repented about Uriah. Therefore, when he had given way to a foolish pride perhaps in numbering the people, or whatever else his sin was in so doing, before any judgement came on, his heart smote him, and he began to confess himself to God. "David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." That was one sign of a good and true repent-



ance, not to wait till the scourge was actually upon him and his people, but to make much of the first faint misgivings of his own heart, and to throw himself at once on God's mercy, without any foolish and vain excuses.

Another sign was, that when Almighty God, in token of His graciously accepting David's penitence, sent him a message by His prophet, permitting him to choose his own and his people's punishment, whether it should be sword or pestilence or famine: he would not have any choice, but left it to God, saying, "Let me fall into the hands of God, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hands of men." This was a second good token of true repentance: that he was willing to cast himself entirely upon God, having no doubt of His love. He knew that God was his tender Parent and, as a loving child, he was quite sure that his kind Father would do better for him than he could possibly do for himself. It would be well for us to ponder deeply on this, against the time, sure to come sooner or later, in which we ourselves shall be feeling God's fatherly hand in one kind of chastisement or another. Then, if we truly repent, we shall not pretend to choose; we shall quite make up our minds, that the particular trouble which is sent is the very best for us. We shall not struggle too violently, nor be too much disheartened, if it lie long and heavy upon us: but, as affectionate children who have done wrong, we shall accept the punishment for our iniquity: like old Eli, who sinned in indulging his children, and when God had touched him in the tenderest point, by passing sentence of death on those children, he meekly sub-

mitted himself, saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Another sign of a true penitent is, that when the judgement comes he should see God's hand in it, and not ascribe it, as worldly men are apt to do, to mere accident, or to man, or to the course of nature. Consider the history in the text. Here is a pestilence raging over all Israel; the people are dying by thousands; seventy thousand in three days; and it seems to have come close to the city of Jerusalem. Other people are alarmed, seeing in it a fearful calamity, which is hanging over them, they know not how: and they busy themselves, it may be, in providing remedies, or in getting out of the way. To them it seems as if the state of the air or of the water, or some carelessness about keeping out of the way of infection, were a sufficient account of the sad visitation. But David is made aware of far more than this. David sees the Angel of the Lord standing over Jerusalem with his sword drawn in his hand. The Lord opens the eye of faith, that it may see His ministering spirits, where the eye of the flesh sees only natural events. Herod seemed, to the irreligious by-standers, to be merely smitten with a violent pain and sickness; but Christians knew that it was the Angel of the Lord who smote him.

But further: among those who are so far religious as to see God's hand in great calamities, and acknowledge His judgements, too many are very unwilling to confess their own share in those judgements. Very few are ready to cry out with David, "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done?" David, we may believe, had his

heart full of distressing remembrances, not of this last sin or error only, I mean his desiring the people to be numbered, but of all his former sins also, more especially those grievous ones of taking Uriah's wife and then contriving how Uriah should be slain. It all came over him at once, and humbled him in the dust before his God. He felt but too certain, that all which happened to God's people in the way of affliction was, or easily might be his own doing. Would that all sinners would give the same token of true penitence, when any sore judgement comes on their country or neighbourhood! Would that we would all say to ourselves, "Here perhaps is famine coming on, or pestilence, or war with rebels: thousands will be struck down or made miserable: and who knows how far I may, mine own self, be answerable for so great a mischief? If I have continued, wilfully and knowingly, but in one sin, who knows how far the bad example, or loss of grace, may have spread? So that one sin may even have made the difference. That one sin, branching out into others, (far and near, secret or open) may have done some harm, some great harm, to so many souls, as to provoke God finally to send the affliction upon the land." Some persons may think it a light thing to take God's Name in vain, to hear it disrespectfully treated, and take part in dishonouring it. But what says the Scripture? "Because of swearing, the land mourneth." Another, in like manner, permits his eyes and senses to go after forbidden things: and so evil passions get the dominion over him and others who ought to be the better for him: these again corrupt others, and so on, until the circle of mischief spreads



over the whole land, and it becomes too much like the prophet's description of Judah. "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses: they were as fed horses in the morning, every one neighed after his neighbour's wife." Observe what follows, concerning these and other great sins. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" When we read or hear such sayings as these, or when we become aware of grievous sin committed in our own time and country, O let us beware of judging others as if we were better than they: let us rather turn our eyes inwards, and consider how much we have added in dark and secret ways perhaps, yet too surely we now perceive that we have added, to the heap of guiltiness which is drawing down God's judgements on our country. Let us not be like the Pharisee, and say, 'Thank God, I have nothing to do with it; but let us rather try to be like David, and say in our hearts,' "I have sinned and I have done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done?" their sins are nothing in comparison.' Can you not imagine how hurtful it must be, in a great fire or at sea in a storm, if the people in danger began presently to lay all the blame upon each other: and how much better things would go on, if each one, sensible of his own past errors, would do his best to redeem them in the present trouble? Much the same is it in a Church or a country, when God's sore judgements come on. Then we take them as God intended, when we lay the blame of them on

our own sins, instead of looking out to see how others have drawn the evil on us.

And if over and above this God put it in the heart of any person to pray and wish as David did, "Let Thy hand, I pray Thee, be on me and on my father's house:" devoting himself, and giving himself up, to suffer, if so it might be, rather than others: this would be indeed a blessed and comfortable sign of the love of God shed abroad in such a man's heart by the Holy Spirit: it would be an acceptable token of true and earnest contrition, and would greatly help, through the mercy of Christ, towards the entire forgiveness of past sins. This would be, so far, taking the Cross upon yourself: so far, such a person might be said to be humbly treading in the footsteps of his gracious Lord, Who in effect said to His Father, "Let Me be as if I had sinned, and as if I had done wickedly: spare these sheep, as if they had done nothing: let Thine hand be upon Me." David in that prayer of his was no doubt a type and figure of our Lord so devoting Himself: and when he went on and made mention of his kindred also, saying not only, let Thine hand be upon me, but likewise, on my father's house; was he not a type of our Lord offering to His Father not only His own sufferings, but also, in some lower yet very true sense, the sufferings of His saints and martyrs, and of His whole mystical Body, the Church: even as S. Paul writes, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in my flesh, for His Body's sake, which is the Church?" Christ our Lord was an example of enduring, for

the sake of us sinners, not only His own grievous untold pangs of soul and body, but also all the pains and distresses which His members should suffer in all time, beginning with her who suffered most of all, His holy Mother, while she waited beneath the Cross. It becomes us to try and remember this, whenever by God's just judgement we are called on to see those near and dear to us suffering: sometimes it may be, even willingly to give them up to it, and pray God to confirm them in the honour of suffering for Him. It is a hard lesson, but a blessed one: and it is one which any of us, for aught we know, might have to learn, if the judgements of God came upon us. The early Christians had very often to practise it. Parents had to give up their children, husbands their wives, friends had to give up their friends who were as their own soul, for the Church of God's sake and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Instead of praying for their friends' lives they had to pray that God would take them to Himself, and make holy martyrs of them. It was a hard lesson, but they learnt it thoroughly, and it brought them, by God's mercy, well through those evil times.

Neither we nor our friends, perhaps may ever be called to martyrdom. But even in the ordinary course of God's providence, and much more in such heavy judgements as we have now some reason to fear, we may be called on to give up, not ourselves only, but one another, for His sake: as David had to pray, "let Thine hand, if need be, be on my father's house, rather than these sheep should suffer." Let



us, with good Bishop Wilson, beseech Him to keep us always prepared for what His providence shall bring forth. Whether He see fit to spare or smite us, let us take everything as a call to repentance. Let us think, Perhaps even now the Angel is standing over us, as in David's sight he stood over Jerusalem, with his sword drawn in his hand. What we should wish to have done, could we so behold him, *that* let us now do, and we shall be safe.

## SERMON XXIII.

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### THE LOVE OF GOD'S NAME.

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SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. cxix. 132.

*“O look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as  
Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name.”*

IN the Collect for this week we beseech God to graft in our hearts the love of His Name: we speak of it, as if it was the beginning of true religion, the seed of all goodness, and such a thing, that, if God of His great mercy would keep us in it, we should have nothing more to seek or desire. And here you see in the 119<sup>th</sup> psalm David considers that he has asked enough for himself, if only he ask and obtain of the Father of Mercies this one thing: that He would look upon him, and be merciful unto him, as He useth to do unto those who love His Name. The Psalmist seems to say, that there is a general mercy which is over all God's works, and also a special distinguishing mercy, which belongs to those only who love His Name: and that if he could obtain this last mercy, he should have no more to ask.

What is this love of God's Name, which is so very precious? and how is it to be obtained?

We know how it is with us, when we love any person among men very dearly. It is a joy and satisfaction to us, only to hear his name, or to see it anywhere written or printed. Our ears distinguish it at once among all other sounds, and our eyes among all the words in the book. So it is with those who have any spark of true love towards God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God: the Holy Blessed and Glorious Trinity. They are glad to see those sacred Names in the Bible or in any other good book, and to hear them pronounced with religious reverence. They are glad of whatsoever puts them in mind of God; whatsoever has His Holy Name called upon it. They love to see a Church, because it is His house; and a Bible, because it His book; and a priest, because he is His servant; and a cross, because it is His mark. Just as in the absence of their earthly friends, parents or children, wives or husbands, brethren or sisters, they are glad of any sort of token, anything which helps them to remember those whom they love, and to feel towards them as if they were present. They love what reminds them of their beloved, and they are displeased with what puts him out of their thoughts. If they have not this mind, we do not call them true and real friends, we do not account their feelings to be true and real love. They may say kind or respectful words when their parent or friend is in sight, but if they take no trouble, find no satisfaction, in remembering them when they are out of sight, we do not call this true love, but something else.

When shall we be of this mind, my brethren, in respect of Almighty God, and of the things which



belong to Him, and in any wise bear His Name? When will the time really seem long to us, if anything happen to keep us from Church, till we can come to His house again, and join with the people that know the joyful sound, in giving thanks unto Him, and speaking good of His Name? Alas! as things now stand, with too many of us it is just the contrary. Instead of the time seeming long, it is apt to seem very short, since men last came to Church or to Holy Communion. I feel sure there are several among us, who would be surprised, were one to shew them out of a book regularly kept, how many weeks, yea, months, have passed, since they last waited upon their Maker and Saviour here in the place which He delights to honour. They would say, Surely it cannot be so long: surely I must have been at Church, or at Holy Communion, since such a time. Now I say nothing at present about their staying away: let us suppose that they have a thorough good reason, that they could not possibly have come; yet their mistaking the time so, their not feeling it long and weary, looks like a sign of something very imperfect in their love. Holy David, when he was kept away from the temple, could say, "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?... O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling: and that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness." These things David might say, because he really loved God's Name, and delighted in everything that belonged to

Him: but to us, for the most part, I fear, these sayings, are cold and unreal in comparison: we have nothing in our hearts which answers to them. Why? What else can it be, but that we do not, alas! we do not, in earnest love God? If we loved Him, we should rejoice to be near Him; we should love the habitation of His house, and the place where His honour dwelleth: we should be glad when they said unto us, We will go into the house of the Lord.

People say indeed, they do not mean to be irreligious, but they cannot command their likings and dislikes: the service is long, and they cannot help its tiring them: and perhaps there are always circumstances, more or less unpleasant and wearisome to one or another. But whatever the cause, still the fact remains, and it is a very sad one, that they are so very unlike the saints of God, and the man after His own heart: and what if very often the evil lie deeper than mere accidental weariness of mind and body? What if the true reason why they take no interest in the Church and its services be, that they do not love to think of Christ's Name as being called *on themselves*; they do not love to be reminded at every turn that they are Christians, known by their Saviour's Name, and having His token, the Cross, marked on their foreheads? They profess indeed and call themselves Christians, and would be greatly surprised and displeased if you denied them the Name of Christ so far: but if they truly loved that Name, would they not bear it in mind continually, and hide it in their heart, that they might not sin against it? Would not this saying of the Wise man be ever present in their minds,

“I will not sin, knowing that I am accounted Thine.” A soldier who loves the service delights of course in doing the exercises, in wearing the dress, in saying the words, in keeping up the behaviour, which he knows to belong to a good soldier: he watches himself, that he may not prove unworthy of his calling. When we are so minded towards Christ and His service, then may we be truly said to love His Name: and then we shall of course feel glad at every opportunity of drawing near to Him by direct exercise of devotion.

We shall be jealous of ourselves, lest we do anything to discredit and dishonour that holy Name which it is our glory and our privilege to bear: and we shall be jealous also of others, tenderly alive to all that is said and done around us, which in any way may affect that Name. It will grate on our ears, when holy persons and holy things are spoken of irreverently. It will be a real pain to us. The Israelites of old time, when they heard bad words uttered of God, or the temple, or anything else that was hallowed, had a custom of rending their clothes, to signify that it was a real pain and grief to them, that they were ashamed of it, and would willingly put themselves to pain and expence to do it away. We are not called on to rend our clothes, but surely it would become Christian persons to shew some little concern, on occasions (alas! too many) when God and His Son and His Church and His Sacraments, and all the holy things pertaining to Him, are undoubtedly scorned and despised. We may at least say some short prayer inwardly in our hearts: we may in some way do honour to our God, and to the



good thing belonging to Him, whatever it be, which others are disposed to treat rudely. One way or another, true love will make us evermore on the watch, that the Name of the Beloved, which we carry about with us, may in no way suffer through our neglect.

Those who so love God's Name, see what a mighty encouragement is held out to them. They are sure of being looked on, and of obtaining mercy. For it is said, "Thou usest to do so unto those that love Thy Name." Almighty God will look upon devout persons, He will not turn His Face away from them, He will be merciful to them, when they confess their sins. He will deal with them as with His loving Apostle, to whom, when he was in the act of denying, He turned Himself, and looked upon him, and by that one merciful look brought him to repentance. And so it is throughout all the Bible: "them that honour Me, I will honour:" and "him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." What could our gracious Master say more, to strengthen and refresh His poor servants? Behold, He promises that nothing at all shall be lost, which we do simply and truly for the love of His Name. Alas, that we should be so unwilling to take Him at His word! Alas, that the ordinary way of Christian people should be so very unlike what we might expect, in those who have learned, from their earliest youth, to know God's Name and depend upon it.

Why do I say this? Because it is but too evident that the generality of Christian people, both rich and poor, are far indeed from loving God's Name best of all. Look at the common sort of decent persons in

the world, see how they spend their time from morning to night: observe in what sort of things they are interested, upon what occasions they look eager, speak earnestly, try and labour their very best. Is it not too plain, that religion and the fear of God, if they come into men's minds at all, come in only as one thing among many? that many live by no rule at all, and that of such as are more exact and regular, very few even think of living by that high and blessed rule of pleasing God in all things, and walking altogether worthy of the glorious Name into which they were baptized? Think only of the prayers we say, night and morning: if we loved God's Name, we should surely try to take pleasure in them: if they are a mere task and a weariness, it must be because we love something else better, and long to have done with our prayers, and to be employed about that other thing. Or let a man recollect how he behaves himself at his meals: does he say any grace, and if he does, is it any better than a mere form? And is he strictly temperate, as knowing that he must give account? And when you are at your work, do you work for God's sake, with a hearty good will: no repining, no covetous thoughts? I might go on asking the same sort of questions about many other things, so as to take in the whole of a man's day, the sum of all his days upon earth: and from how many might I expect a hopeful answer? I suppose I may truly say, not from one in a thousand. Yet Christ's Name has been known upon earth for more than eighteen hundred years; and we have known it from our youth up, and were called by it, and solemnly sworn to honour it, before we

could know anything. We know also what He threatens to those who are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot. He will spue them out of His mouth. We know all this, and yet we go on from day to day very neglectful of ourselves, very careless about giving up *all* to God, and doing *all* in His Name. How can we expect pity or pardon in the hour of death and in the day of Judgement?

Blessed be God, it is not too late to change. Only we must be well aware that we cannot change ourselves any more than the Ethiopian his skin, and the leopard his spots. So the collect for this week signifies to us, teaching us to pray to God, that He would "*graft* in our hearts the love of His Name." Why is it called grafting? Because the love of God's Name will not grow of itself in our hearts. It is too precious a fruit: it must be brought in and added unto us. But then we have His sure promise, that we shall not seek for it, and ask it, in vain. If any man among you lack wisdom, that wisdom which would teach him how to love the best things best, and therefore to love God's Name above all things: let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him. Pray earnestly, pray again and again, pray day and night, my brethren, for this one thing: that you and those you love may be true lovers of God's Name.

And together with your prayers, I advise you to be very diligent in watching *their* ways, whom you see trying to live well. Admire them, and try to love them, and in your measure to tread in their steps. Never be tempted either to scorn or to envy them. The devil will tempt you, if he can, to both



these sins : he will tempt you to scorn those whom you see better than yourself, by persuading you that it is no use, they are over-particular, they need not take so much trouble. Again when he finds that you *will* respect them, he will tempt you to envy them ; to be vexed at their superior goodness, and to find in it what imperfections you can. Do not you listen to him : strive both to acknowledge and to love the grace of Christ in your brother. And if you cannot at once force your hearts truly to love either your God or your neighbours, yet go on doing your duty, and praying : the warm affectionate feeling of love will come after, in God's good time. Persevere in looking towards Christ and trying to please Him, though it be with a dull and heavy heart. That heaviness, for aught you know, may be the penance which He has ordained, to help effectually towards your final forgiveness. It may be the sorrow that endures for a night, that everlasting joy may come in the morning.

## SERMON XXIV.

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### THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND.

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SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MARK viii. 1, 2.

*“Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.”*

WHATEVER may be said of the hardness of some parts of the Bible, this surely is plain and easy to understand, a picture which all, who will attend, may without difficulty place before their mind's eye; a want, a need, a calamity, which all can enter into; a mercy shewn in relieving that want, of which all must feel the value. For we all know what it is to be hungry, and some of us know a great deal more than they could wish of the ordinary difficulty of obtaining food, and of the hard work which has to be gone through by the generality of mankind, in order to make sure of their daily meals. “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread:” it was said to our first father, and in him to all of us, but most immediately and directly to those, who have to work each day for the bread of that day. And they are

the far greater part of mankind. To the far greater part of mankind, then, my brethren, that miracle of our Blessed Master, which you heard just now in the Gospel, is in some sense but too plain and easy to be understood. We enter into the meaning of it at once. But the doings of Jesus Christ are the doings of God: of the Almighty God, Son of the Father, made Man for our sake. Therefore you may be sure there is much more in them than we can understand at once; yea more a great deal than we could understand, if we spent ever so much time in thinking of them. So in this miraculous feast there is a great deal more meaning, you may be sure, than the mere act of bounty and power, such as a great king or rich nobleman on earth might practise, by way of doing a very kind and good-natured action, making people happy for the moment, and so an end. Depend upon it, the Saviour of our souls, the great King of heaven and earth, had a deeper meaning than that, in performing this mighty work. Let us go over the circumstances of it somewhat particularly, if haply, by His loving help, we may come to know somewhat of these His deeper meanings for our good.

We are then to imagine to ourselves a steep hill near the sea; not the great open sea, but an inland lake, about thirty miles long and five or six miles across: a steep green hill, and our Lord with His disciples sitting down on the green grass, and the people of the neighbouring country flocking to Him, and crowding round Him, all sorts and all ages, men women and children, partly to hear His instructions, and partly to be cured by Him of divers diseases



and torments. For as S. Matthew tells us, “<sup>a</sup>great multitudes came unto Him, having with them lame men, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they laid them at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.” Thus receiving benefit from Him in their bodies, they were the more inclined to listen to the heavenly instructions which He gave them for the salvation of their souls. And, between the two, they were so taken up with Him, that they continued waiting upon Him three whole days, until all the provisions which they brought with them were exhausted. And then our compassionate Saviour, taking pity on their present hunger and faintness, as He had before on the more grievous infirmities of many of them, put forth His Almighty power to provide bread for them: a thing which we never read of His doing for Himself, not even after His forty days’ fast. He waited, till the Angels ministered unto Him, as when He was weary and sat down on Jacob’s well, He waited until the woman came to draw water, and His disciples to bring Him meat. But here we see Him doing that for His poor followers, which for Himself He declined doing; He feeds them by miracle.

And our Lord’s manner of proceeding is very remarkable. He might have quieted the people’s hunger by a mere act of His Will, causing them to feel no such pain and craving, even as He had supported Himself and His prophets under it, through

<sup>a</sup> S. Matt. xv. 30, 31.

their whole forty days' fast. He might have rained down manna or quails from heaven, as in very old times He had done to His people in the wilderness, and let them gather it for themselves. But it was not His Will to feed them in either of these ways. He chose rather to do the whole, in a manner, through His disciples: consulting them in the first instance, and employing them all along. Even as it is, if you mark it, in almost all His mighty works, both of nature and grace, He does us good through others, men and women like ourselves. He gives us life, nourishment, education, tender care of all kinds, through our parents, and through others who are as parents to us. He gives us His holy Word, and His precious Sacraments through His Apostles and Evangelists first, and after them through His bishops and other ministers, commissioned by them. And so in this and in His other miraculous feast, He does all through His disciples. First, to prove them, He points out the sadness of the case: "<sup>b</sup> I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat." The disciples, in answer, say just the same as any one of us would say in the like circumstances. "<sup>c</sup> Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" 'Whence should we have so much bread here in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?' They looked at the outside of things, in the natural way, forgetting what themselves had seen with their eyes a very short time before, when, there being a still greater multitude, Jesus had fed them miraculously with five loaves

<sup>b</sup> S. Mark viii. 2.<sup>c</sup> Ib. 4.

and two fishes. We may think it strange, that the disciples should forget this so soon; but is it not quite as strange that we should so soon and so often forget His tender providential mercies, so wonderfully shewn to us in various ways, and begin to grumble and complain, mistrust Him and envy our brethren, as soon as ever things go wrong, and we cannot see our way to amend them? There is at present, by God's mercy, a fair promise of a fruitful harvest; but what if any sad visitation should destroy our promising crops? Are there not, think you, too many of us, who would be full of discontent, and, if not openly accusing God, at least repining and grumbling at their own lot, and full of anxious care for the morrow: quite forgetting that there is the same God in heaven, Who has fed us all our lives long unto this day, and that we may well cast all our care upon Him, seeing He never ceases to care for us. Our Lord's disciples speak here, as if they still had something of that imperfect mind. "Whence should we have so many loaves?" but He bids them at once put away their doubts, just asking them, How many loaves they have, and when they said, Seven, commanding the people to sit down, and without more ado, taking the loaves in His hands, and blessing them, and beginning to distribute with as little fear of falling short, as if there had been seven thousand instead of seven. And so they all eat and are filled: the seven loaves are made to be sufficient for four thousand people, besides woman and children. And as it would not probably be much out of the way to suppose, that there were in the company as many women and as many children as there were grown men, we



may reckon that there were, on this occasion, twelve thousand—as great a number as the whole population of the large town near this place—fed with those seven loaves; fed so abundantly, that the fragments which remained were enough to fill seven baskets. And besides the bread, S. Mark adds, there were a few small fishes: bread and fish being the common diet, as it should seem, of the Son of Man and His followers, as it was the diet of the ordinary poor and working men of that neighbourhood. Whereby we are put in mind that our merciful God provides us not only with the bare necessities of life as bread, but also with all its conveniences and comforts, as it is written, “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.”

Now I want you to observe, how in all these proceedings, wonderful and divine as they were, our Lord did everything in order: in the same order whereby He provides for us in what is called the common course of nature. It is all done, as I said before, through men like ourselves. Our Lord received the loaves of the disciples, and employed the hands of the disciples to distribute them; He did not give them to the multitude with His own Hands, telling them to approach Him one by one, but He formed the multitude into companies, and sent the disciples, one to each company; much as He does in His Church, in respect of spiritual blessings. He might have given us His Word and Sacraments directly from Himself, without any clergy to convey them; but it hath pleased Him to do otherwise. And it is not the less His gift, because it comes

through His ministers, neither will it do our souls the less good: even as that bread and fish was quite as effectual to nourish the persons who partook of it, given them, as it was, by some one of the Apostles, as it would have been, had our blessed Lord in each case given it with His own Hand. There is the same condescension in His thus employing ministers, as in His not creating all the bread which He gave them, but making a beginning, small though it were, yet a real beginning, from those seven loaves, which He caused to go as far they could.

Then observe that He does it all by benediction. He took the seven loaves, and *blessed*, and brake, and distributed. Afterwards when the few small fishes were brought forward, He *blessed*, and commanded to set them also before them. Nothing would He give them without His blessing. Surely we must be very dull, if we do not learn hereby to ask God's blessing on all our meals, all our pursuits, all our undertakings, whether for the good of others or for our own. If His blessing be not upon it, how can it do us good? And if even the great Lord and Creator did not account what He gave His people sufficiently sanctified by His touch, but used also His word and prayer, why should we think much to say grace devoutly before and after all our principal meals?

And He teaches us in the same way not to be wasteful. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." What was it to Him, the Maker and Owner of all, Him Who "openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness," whether those few crumbs, which remained over and above

unto them that had eaten, were carefully preserved or no? To Him it could make no difference: the difference is to us His reasonable creatures, whether we will deal reverently and gratefully, with the provision which His love makes for us, or whether we will waste it, as no object to us. I wish we thought of all this, more than we are apt to do. I wish we were always thankful for His unspeakable gifts, never wasteful of them. Especially I wish we thought of them more seriously than we do afterwards. It is very observable, what we read of the disciples, but a little further on in this very chapter. I daresay, some of us might think, that if we had twice within a few weeks seen our Saviour feed thousands by miracle, we should not very soon forget it, nor begin to mistrust Him, as if we knew nothing of His mighty power and goodness. It may seem to us, I daresay, as if, after such a thing as that, we should be sure to carry about with us through the world, come what will, a cheerful un-failing trust in His good providence. But how did the disciples really behave? Within a very short time of this miracle, on making one of their short voyages across the lake, they found that they had forgotten to take bread, and had not with them in the vessel more than one loaf. Our Lord just then had occasion to say something to them about leaven: and they, having their minds full of care concerning bread, applied what He said accordingly; upon which He reproved them for continuing still anxious about such things. “<sup>d</sup> Are ye so yet without understanding? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five

<sup>d</sup> S. Matt. xvi. 9, 10.



loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" As much as to say, "Having seen those miracles, how can ye any more be anxious, as though I could not provide bread enough and to spare for you?" Then the disciples understood that He spake not unto them of the leaven of bread, but of the false doctrine of which they were in danger, the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They understood that He would have them anxious, not for their mortal bodies but for their immortal souls: that if they, earnestly caring for their duty, and desiring to please Him, would keep themselves from the leaven of malice and wickedness, of which they were but in too great danger, He would provide all that they could need in the matter of earthly sustenance. As He spake to them at another time, in a sermon made perhaps on the same mountain: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these temporal things, meat, drink, and clothing, shall be given you, over and above."

When times are hard, or we are afraid of their proving hard, we cannot, it may be, help wondering, how we and our children are to get our bread, and what else we want in this world. But let it not be unfaithful wondering. Has He not fed us all our lives long unto this day? and why should we not trust Him for the little time which yet remains? We see by this loving miracle, that His blessing is all that is wanted, to make a very scanty provision go a very great way. And you may thankfully trust, that the longer you wait on Him with patience, the greater

and surer will your relief be at the last. Observe why He had compassion on that starving multitude. Not merely because they had nothing to eat, but also because they had been with Him three days. They had persevered in waiting on Him, for all their inconvenience and hunger. Therefore He works this miracle for them, and if any of them had gone away before that time, in impatience and fretfulness, that man would have lost his share in the miraculous feast.

Now that which is true concerning earthly relief and nourishment, is even much more true, as concerning spiritual relief and nourishment. If it needed humble trust, and patient waiting for the men, women, and children of that company to partake of Christ's outward and visible feast, surely He will expect us to be trustful and patient, in respect of the Bread which cometh down from heaven. What that Bread is, we know: it is "the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." That is the seven loaves, the sevenfold or perfect feast, the feast full of all the rich gifts of the Holy Ghost, which He has miraculously provided to sustain us here in the wilderness of this present world. It is generally necessary to salvation, i. e. necessary for all. What if a man have slighted it hitherto? Surely he is not in a safe way: it is as if, being one of those hungry persons, he had refused to draw near and receive his share of the bread which our Lord had blessed. What if (still worse) any one have come to the Holy Sacrament unworthily, in wilful and known sin? It is as if he had taken what our Lord gave him of the seven

loaves and had cast it down, or trampled on it, or made any other rude, profane, insolent use of it. What if any have come and eaten, and yet, though he tried to come worthily, have not found the comfort he wished for? have not seemed to himself to taste the blessing? He must not be cast down, but must still depend upon that love, which kept the people waiting three days, only in order to feed them more effectually at last. Only do not forsake the feast, do not go away and separate yourself from the mount and congregation of God's people; only wait on Him in patience and confidence, and see if He do not, according to the prayer which He hath taught you, give you this day your daily bread, the bread both of your souls and bodies, this day and all the days of your life. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "He will save His people and give His blessing unto His inheritance, will feed them and set them up for ever."



## SERMON XXV.

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CHRISTIANS, SONS, NOT SLAVES.

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EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ROM. viii. 15.

*“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”*

WHICH of us has not, before now, felt the temptation to say, It is too hard, too severe, when he has been told of Christian duties, and earnestly pressed to fulfil them? We get up into the pulpit here Sunday after Sunday; and week-day after week-day we talk to one and another, to some at school, to others in their own houses; we put them in mind of sins committed, of duties neglected, of evil habits encouraged, temptations not shunned, means of grace slighted and put off: and they dare not contradict us, because they know it is all true, they acknowledge at once, “very right: what you say is all quite good and reasonable, I know I ought to alter these things:” and still we too plainly see, and the event too clearly proves, that there is no real intention of altering them. And you know it yourselves, brethren, without any interference of ours, we all

know it too well by our own sad experience, how often God Himself, by the secret whisperings of our conscience, reminds us of this or that commandment which we are breaking; and we put it by for the present, with a blind notion, that for us at the moment the commandment is too hard to be kept: we will repent, we will amend, bye-and-bye, when He gives us more grace, but for the present we will let it alone. O how sadly have very many of us gone on and stained their consciences in following up such evil imaginations as these, listening, as Eve did, to the tempter's voice, "Ye shall not surely die," and doing that, of which now they feel they should have given the whole world rather than do it! But then to their poor unthinking, unbelieving hearts it seemed as if they could not keep themselves; they must do it, come what would.

When people are in this way, the better and the worse mind within them, that is what Holy Scripture calls the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit: and it is a struggle for life or death: it can only end in one of two ways: either the flesh will prevail, and we shall be more and more servants of sin, we shall sink down deeper and deeper, remove further and further from God, and in the end shall lose Him and ourselves for ever: or by His grace we shall get the better, we shall settle ourselves in a way of prevailing against the temptations which most easily beset us: we shall give less and less encouragement to bad thoughts, and break ourselves, more and more entirely, of bad habits: and so our very trials and spiritual troubles will be to us so many steps onward in the way of eternal life. But to the natural man,

this is a thing impossible. To will, may be present with him, but how to perform that which is good he finds not. No good thing *abides* in him ; the best that can be said for him is that good comes and goes in and out of him. And this is so painfully certain and clear, that too often men are tempted to give up the fight in despair, and to let sin have its own way with them : as if, however it be with others, it were impossible for *them* to be good. They account themselves in a manner debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. They feel as if *they*, at any rate, could not “mortify the deeds of the body,” though they are well aware, that in order to live, they must do so. And so, with their eyes open, miserable men, they give themselves up not to live, but to die for ever.

But the Creator and Lover of our souls cannot bear to see us so perishing, for whom His Son died : and therefore, as in Holy Baptism, He gave us of His good Spirit, whereby we might be able to “mortify the deeds of the body,” and what would otherwise have been too hard and too high for us might be brought within our reach : so His Holy Scriptures and His Apostolic Church never cease putting us in mind of this great unspeakable gift. When poor tempted Christians might otherwise faint in their troublesome warfare, and say, “It is no use, I cannot stand upright :” then comes in the blessed Apostle with this most compassionate and loving message : “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” As if he should say, ‘You fear the sin will be too hard for you, because you found it so in the old times, before you



were Christians ; but be of good cheer: it need not be too hard for you, now that you have received the Spirit of God. For that Spirit is not a spirit of bondage; but where He is, there is liberty. Having received Him, ye are no more servants but sons. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." He is a Spirit not of bondage, but of adoption.' The new law which He brought down from heaven on the first Whitsunday was not simply the repeating of the old law, the just and good and holy commandments which had been given on Mount Sinai, or of such truths and duties as God had written in the heart even of the heathen, if they would but have regarded them. Had the Gospel been no more than this, the Spirit which brought it down would have been a spirit of bondage, it would have left us in the condition of our heathen or Jewish forefathers, knowing the right, but not helped sufficiently to do it: but the Gospel is far more than this, it tells us, "God hath made Himself your Father, that your duty may not be too hard for you. It speaks to you, from beginning to end, as to children. The Holy Spirit which speaks by it is not a spirit of bondage, but of adoption; He has entered into each one of you, to make you members of Christ the Son of God, and so to make each one of you, what by nature you could not be, truly and really sons of God." As is the difference between a master and a father, such is the difference between what God was to you naturally, and what He is now. And the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Church and the most Holy Spirit Who speaks by them both, speak to us always as to children and not as to slaves.

Let us for one moment think over some of the chief differences between the condition of a slave and that of a child in a family. A slave, on being bought and entering into a house, naturally fears his master, as his master: *that* is the first thought which he must have of him, before he knows enough of him, either to love or to dislike him. But a child born into a house—who does not know that the first and most natural affection of its heart is to love its mother and its father? As its first duty is to honour them, so its first feeling is to love them. Love then is the ruling principle, the first thing and the last, that by which all is kept right, between a child and a parent: but fear is what people most depend on, to keep things right between them and their slaves. And love belongs to the Gospel and kingdom of God; fear, to the condition of men apart from that Gospel, and outside that kingdom. Which of the two, my brethren, most helps you in your duty? Surely there is nothing like love, to help us in keeping the commandments: surely it is much easier to obey a father than a master; to give up our own will to one whom we love, than to one whom we only fear. “Fear,” says the beloved and loving disciple, “hath torment;” there is something in it of pain and constraint; but love is altogether delightful and satisfactory; to give up one’s own pleasure and profit to the beloved, is a joy and comfort to one who truly loves: to such it is far more blessed to give than to receive. You will understand it in a moment, if you will but think of a mother waiting on a young child; she will go on, denying herself night and day for years, and it will seem to her but a few days, for the love that

she bears to the child. There is no need of words to prove it: you all know, as soon as it is mentioned, that there is a power in love to make hard things easy: that there is no such secret of obedience and order in a family, as the mutual, steady, self-denying love of parents and children, one towards another. And so it comes to pass among dutiful obedient Christians; their true love of God, as their Father, enables them to overcome the keenest temptations, to mortify the deeds of the body, to grow continually more obedient and dutiful.

And then, secondly, there is the feeling that this true love, this content and joy in the Lord on our part, and this merciful acceptance of us on His part, will never come to an end: it will by His blessing grow up along with us, and come in time to be part of our very being; it will continue with us in heaven; it will be in a manner heaven to us. This also is part of the difference between a servant and a son: as He Who is the Truth has instructed us: "the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." Our reward and our hope is openly declared to be eternal; therefore we are able to do greater things than the Israelites, who looked forward with only a dim and doubtful expectation of immortality.

Again, the son is naturally an heir, and may expect to come into the property at the appointed time. The slave has no such reasonable expectation. And so it is in the great Christian family. Because we are children, we are heirs; heirs to a princely, a royal treasure; "heirs of God;" "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." And what is above all, we are not only



“heirs of God,” but also “joint-heirs with Christ,” so joined to Him by His Holy Spirit, as to have become truly parts and members of Him: and therefore, wonderful as the saying is, what He inherits, we inherit. If we overcome, He hath granted us to sit on His Throne, even as He hath overcome and is set down with His Father on His Throne. And we may overcome, if we will, by His strength, to Whom we are united.

Put all this together, and see, my brethren, how inexcusable we are, if, being so adopted, we do not in earnest walk as sons, really and truly doing our Father’s will. He invites us to love Him, because He first loved us. Justly might He call on us, as His servants, to serve Him for fear only; but with this He is not content: He says, “My son, give Me thine heart: I will be to you a Father, and you shall be to Me sons.” And because we are sons, He engages to love us for ever, and to give us an eternal inheritance. And to crown all, we being unable, through our weak and corrupt nature, so much as to enter into the meaning of these His great mercies, much less to walk worthy of them, He hath given us, before we could know anything, the Gift, the unspeakable Gift, His Holy Spirit uniting us to His Son, through Whom strengthening us we can do all things.

Away then with all unworthy imaginations, as though our Lord were a hard Master, requiring conditions which He hath made us unable to perform: “reaping where He hath not sown, and gathering where He hath not strawed.” We are now able to mortify the deeds of the body, because we have re-

ceived the Spirit of adoption. We can drink the cup of self-denial, or, if need be, of disappointment, sorrow, agony, which our Lord at any time may put into our hands, because we can cry out as He did, Abba, Father. You know His prayer in the garden : " Abba, Father," He said in His Agony, " all things are possible unto Thee : if it be possible, take away this cup from Me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Doubtless His faithful follower, S. Paul, had that prayer in his thoughts, when he reminded his brethren in their sufferings that they too might cry, Abba, Father ; that they did so daily and hourly, and as often as they said the prayer, which the Son had taught them. And the Lord's Prayer is ours, my brethren, as truly and by as direct a gift as it was any of theirs, and we have just the same privilege as they had to cry out, Abba, Father ; therefore we are as inexcusable as they would have been, if we shrink from our saving trials and troubles, because they are too sore for us, or from His plain and wholesome commandments, because they are too hard. He, Who by joining us to Himself hath made us God's children, will enable us to say after Him, " The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?"

Think of Him, my brethren, my younger brethren especially, the next time you find yourselves in the way of strong temptation. Say in your hearts, say to the seducing spirit, We can and will deny ourselves, and suffer, if need be, with Christ, and that gladly ; it is for our Father's sake and it is our Elder brother's portion. How hardly does the loving husband and father task himself often for his wife and children's

sake ! How entirely does he forego his pleasure and ease, what burthens does he take on himself, and that most willingly, if he can but see a fair chance of providing for those whom he loves ! When we have come to love our Saviour with but a single grain of such love as we feel towards those who are near and dear to us on earth, we shall not think it hard to make ventures, to endure pains and losses, to give up delights for His sake. We know how it is with affectionate and dutiful children, at school or college or in places of service, or anywhere at a distance : how the hope of pleasing their parents helps them to do right and to keep themselves in the good way. Much more will it help and cheer us all, if we think much of God as of our heavenly Father, and submit ourselves wholly to His Will, for the short while that He is to be still out of our sight. It will purify and exalt all our joys, will sweeten and assure all our hopes, will cherish in us that reverential love, whereby, more than anything else, we may be trained up and prepared to do service before Him in heaven.



## SERMON XXVI.

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### THE TRUE RICHES.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xvi. 11, 12.

*“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the un-righteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”*

SUPPOSING any great rich man in any neighbourhood were to give out publicly, what he intended to do with his property, how eagerly would all persons, who thought themselves at all concerned, come to hear about it! If they had but a chance of receiving something of it, themselves, their friends, or relations, no doubt their minds would run very much upon it before-hand; they would listen, as earnestly as possible, when he began to make his will known: they would be very diligent in fulfilling all the conditions which he required of them, in order to the receiving of his bounty. I suppose we should, of course, most of us behave in this way, to make the most of any kind purpose, which a wealthy neighbour might have towards us.

Now here, in the parable of the unjust steward, and in the remarks of our Saviour upon it, He, the great Lord of heaven and earth, gives us to know what He will do with His own. The Owner, not only of all gold and silver, but of all the treasures of the eternal and glorious kingdom, He plainly tells us by what rule He intends one day to dispose of those treasures. If a man desire to be rich and great, now let him listen; now let him learn how to be rich and great for ever.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” Here are two lessons which we must thoroughly learn and practise, if we would have our part of that glorious inheritance. First, we must understand that the riches and good things here are but shadows, or tokens, or types of the true: and next, we must make up our minds to consider none of them as being properly our own. What we seem to have here, is neither real in itself, nor are we the real owners of it. So far as it is good, it is but the shadow of something better, and we are only entrusted with it for a time, for a little while. We are God’s stewards, and shall soon be called to give an account to the great Master of the family.

Whoever will always remember these two things, 1. That what seems desirable to him in this life, is but a figure or token of a real blessing in the next; and, 2. That he has but the charge of it for a year or two, during the owner’s pleasure: such a person

will be on his guard against every wrong use of worldly goods. He will neither depend upon them, nor think he may please himself with them.

But let us repeat the first of these rules, as it stands in our Blessed Lord's own words. "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" The unrighteous mammon simply means, money, possessions, property; which is called *unrighteous*, because it too generally tempts men to dishonesty and wickedness. The word "unrighteous," is a kind of bad mark, set by the Almighty on the very wealth itself, to hinder persons from desiring it, or taking any pleasure in it for its own sake. Because we are apt to be so fond of money, He plainly tells us that it is unrighteous: it has the stain of wickedness and dishonesty upon it: and as the Apostle tells us, it is the root of all evil. It is good for nothing but to be well spent and got rid of.

And when is it well spent and got rid of? When we make friends of it in heaven. When we so spend it, that the holy Beings there may pray for us, and wait for us, and be ready to receive us into their blessed company. This is being faithful in that base and unrighteous thing, money, when we lay it out as He Who trusted us with it will approve. The happy and glorious consequence will be, that Christ will commit to our trust the true riches.

What are the true riches, which our Lord teaches us thus to set against the dishonest riches of this world? We know not yet what they are, we have only some faint notion; but we know that the Scripture every where speaks of them, and leads us to



think very much of them. Thus in the Revelations, the Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem, is thus described: “<sup>a</sup>The city was pure gold, like unto clear glass: and the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones: and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” So S. Paul speaks again and again of “the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints:” and we are given to understand that the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, and Solomon’s temple, which were all inlaid with gold, were but images, shadows, patterns of things in heaven, shewn to Moses in the mount, and to David by the Spirit of God. The gold, and silver, and jewels, and other like things on earth, are but pictures and tokens of the real treasures; *they* abide in heaven, far out of sight and beyond thought: *they* are the true riches, the others are but riches of unrighteousness: that is, to the corrupt, carnal, unrighteous mind they seem to be riches, but not to the mind that is opened to the truth of God.

And it is the same with other earthly things: with praise and honour, with pleasure and delight, such as men give their hearts to here. The love and the honour, which we so earnestly seek from one another, what is it but a pattern and shadow of the love and honour, which God promises good Christians, from His saints and angels in the Church made perfect? A happy family here is a type of heaven, where God our Father, the Church our mother, and our holy and loving brethren and sisters who have gone before, or are to come after, shall one day make

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xxi. 18—21.

up one blessed and glorious company with us, accounting nothing too good, too honourable for us, if we have but kept the blessing which Christ gave us, when He made us members of Himself.

Again, these things which we call pleasures on earth, and which so carry away our weak hearts; what are they to the heavenly joys, the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore? They are nothing to be compared with them: yet it should seem that by God's merciful condescension, the one are made images and shadows of the other. There is the pure river of the water of life; the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits; the voice of harpers harping with their harps; the new song chanted continually before the throne; the sun that no more goes down, the moon that never again withdraws itself. All that here seems bright and desirable, has in heaven something to answer it, only infinitely brighter, and more desirable than it. As a picture stands for the living man, and the shadow for the substance, so what we admire and love here stands for something there to be truly admired and loved.

On the other hand, the miseries also, the shameful and tormenting accidents, which our life is beset with, ever since Adam sinned, are to a considerate mind, understanding the Scriptures, so many tastes and samples of God's anger, faint tokens of the anguish prepared in the other world for them that hate Him. To be tormented with fire and brimstone: to have no rest day nor night: to have poison for drink: to be torn with wild beasts, and with the teeth of serpents of the dust: to be chained hand and foot in outer darkness, where is weeping and

gnashing of teeth: to be turned with shame from the highest room to the lowest: to be driven out for ever from the Presence of Christ, the care and love of His holy Angels, and the brotherly kindness of His saints:—these are the accounts of the portion of the wicked, after they shall have completed their wickedness, dying impenitent; and all these, dreadful as they are, we know, are mere shadows and parables, compared with the horrible and eternal reality.

This is how Christ would have us look at things; that is, He would have us see them, as they really are: He would have us despise both the good and evil of this world, in comparison with that which is to come. He would have us firmly believe, that nothing is true and real which passes away so very soon: that it is all but a shadow, cast before, in the way which God knows best for us: a shadow of the true riches, the true glory, the true want, the true shame and reproach, which are to come.

So much our Saviour teaches, by what He says of the true riches and the unrighteous mammon: and He adds, moreover, that none of the things here in fact belong to us. Men call themselves owners: they say commonly, *my* house, *my* land, *my* money, *my* children, *my* servants; but the truth is, these all belong to another: they cannot be ours, since we are not our own. We are left awhile in the midst of these shadows, in order that by them God may try us, whether we are meet to receive the true blessings, which are the substance of these things: much in the same way as little children are taught this and that, by “making believe,” as they call it.



Again, God trusts us for a while here with a little portion of that which is not our own but His, in order that, bye and bye, we having rightly and sufficiently proved and exercised ourselves in this little, may have, not the same, but a great deal more and more perfect, given us for our own and for ever in heaven: even as people give children a little something, which they may call their property,—a little garden, for instance,—and tell them, ‘Now let us see how well you can manage this; do your best, and bye and bye you may have one for your very own.’

Or we may liken our own case to that of servants, when their master is out of sight, that is, of course, for the far greater part of their time. Like them, we have the use and handling of our heavenly Master’s goods, and He expects us to be very conscientious in preserving and improving them. If we spend them as our own, we break our Lord’s trust, and forfeit His favour. We had need make the most of any little pleasure they may give us, for it is all we shall ever get from them: they will be soon taken from us for ever, and will leave nothing but a bitter taste behind. If, on the other hand, we do our best with them, conscientiously, because they are His, He will give them back to us, and far more than they are, infinitely higher in their kind, made perfect and eternal.

Though we, and all we have, must ever be in God’s hand, yet, in some secret and wonderful way, the heavenly blessings shall be our own. What we have here, is not at all our own: it is strictly and properly His, to be accounted for by us: but what we

shall have there will be indeed our own, our portion for ever, in some sense which we cannot yet at all imagine. For indeed the great God and Owner of all will Himself vouchsafe to be ours in that day, and all that is His will be truly ours, according to our measure and fitness for such a blessing: all that is Christ's will be truly the property of each one of Christ's glorified members, though as yet we cannot say how, nor perhaps shall we be ever able to do so.

This is what our Lord is doing with us, when He trusts us with any kind of property: and what He does, we know not now; but if we be worthy, we shall know hereafter.

In the mean time, let us cast aside, once and for ever, that most unworthy and unchristian way of saying or thinking, "I will do what I will with mine own." Too many think in this way of their worldly substance, be it more or less: rich men think they are free to please themselves with their riches; poor men think the same of their bodily health, their time, skill, and strength, which are in fact their riches on earth. We are all too apt to say, "It is mine own: who has any right to challenge my doing what I will with it?"

But you and I, my brethren, if we would be good and happy, must entirely leave off all such words and thoughts. We have nothing of our own in this world: how should we, since we ourselves are not our own, but bought with a price? And again, how should we, since the things of this world are not real things, but shadows only, for a time, of great and true and eternal blessings to come?

Christ's merciful purpose in teaching us these things will be accomplished, if we will begin this day, and go on every day of our lives, to use every thing as being not our own, but His: and if we will every night on our knees give an account to Him of our stewardship for that day: certain as we are that the time must soon come when we shall be no longer stewards.



## SERMON XXVII.

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THIS LIFE, OUR TRIAL FOR ETERNITY.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xvi. 10.

*“He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”*

It is a great and awful thought which is put before us in these words by the Saviour and Guide of our souls: the great importance, namely of every part of our behaviour here in this present world, seeing that from beginning to end we are here upon our trial. The Lord and Head and Father of the family tries and proves us His children and servants whilst we are here by the little things of this world, whether we are fit to be entrusted with the great things of the world to come. The life in which we now are is our place of education, our school, our apprenticeship, which if we get through well, we shall be ready for that which God hath prepared for us in the eternal life bye and bye. The little, short, passing affairs in which the Lord employs us now, are to us in one way great, and enduring and eternal,

for by them, and by our behaviour in them, He would have us to become ready for the great, the true, the eternal things. It seems in itself a very small matter, that a man should allow himself one while to say his prayers in a hurry; another, to go on looking on what he should have turned his eyes away from; another, to have cross and angry, discontented and fretful thoughts; another to speak unkind and scornful words: these things and many more such are taken by most men as trifles, and matters of course: they wonder why any one should concern himself about them, they cannot imagine how their behaviour in such every day circumstances as these should make any difference to them millions of years hence. Cain, e. g. (as we may well believe) could not imagine why the Lord should care for his merely allowing himself to look cross and black at his brother: and I suppose that even to us who have heard it so often it may even now seem strange that the great Almighty God should call out of heaven and reprove him for such a thing as that. Yet God did so call on Cain: “<sup>a</sup> Why is thy countenance fallen?” saith the Lord: and it is very plain why He so spake to him: the fallen countenance, the cross, fretful, envious look, was but one thing among many, whereby Cain was training himself up gradually to be the murderer of his brother. God spoke to Cain about it, as He speaks to us all; He would have him check the mischief in its first beginnings, because He knows that otherwise it will soon become too mighty for us: He knows that such

<sup>a</sup> Gen. iv. 6.

as we are in these ordinary temptations, such we shall prove if ever we are called to any great and heavy trial. We may not think so, we may be of Hazeal's mind, who when the Prophet told him of the cruelties he should commit against the children of Israel, exclaimed, "<sup>b</sup>Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" We may fancy ourselves safe at least against the great and deadly sins: but He who reads our hearts knoweth better. He tells us, "If you are faithful, dutiful, pure, in your looks, turning them away at once when defiling objects are near, then you will by His grace be preserved from the great and gross sins of the flesh: if you will not help yourself to so much as an apple or a handful of wood without the owner's leave, God will keep you by His grace and providence from more daring and direct acts of theft: but if you steal little things, you will become in His sight a regular thief, if you take liberties with the eye, you will be a breaker of the seventh commandment."

Both in His Sermon on the Mount, and in very many of His parables, our Lord teaches us the great consequence of what seem trifles to us: and here in the text He lays it down once for all, and in words which refer to the whole of every man's conduct, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, i. e. in your use of this world's wealth, which so often makes man unrighteous, who will commit to your trust the true riches,

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kgs. viii. 13.



the everlasting treasures of the kingdom of heaven? And if you have not been faithful and exact in your dealings with these worldly things, which could never really belong to you, but were only lent you for a time, who shall give you the heavenly things, which whosoever hath, will find them his own for ever?

Our Lord, in making these remarks was, as you know, following up His parable of the unjust steward, of which the account is shortly this: A rich man's confidential servant, who received his rents for him, finds that he is about to lose his place, and being at a loss where to find a refuge for himself, seeks favour with the tenants by secretly abating their rent without leave: expecting that when he should be out of place they would freely receive him and be kind to him in return for the dishonesty by which they had profited. You see the worldly wisdom of this: you see that he was sharp and alert in making the most for his own convenience of the short time which remained for him to have the command of his lord's property. And others, not so bad as he, may be continually seen contriving how by little attentions to obtain great favours: fairly or unfairly, the children of this world are wise and crafty in making the most of little opportunities of promoting their own interest: their eyes are ever open to see, their hands ever ready to lay hold of, any chance of winning what they have set their hearts on. Well would it be for the children of light, Christians whom God hath set in the way to heaven, if they were equally earnest and active, equally awake, diligent and thrifty, in their use of the means of grace, and other spiritual advantages

with which He has so abundantly trusted them ! Go into any large town, look into the shops, walk up and down the streets, observe what the people are about from morning to night : how knowingly they lay themselves out to obtain customers, and get a good price for their wares : what a variety of arts they employ to advertise and recommend anything that they have to sell, how earnest they look as they hurry along the street, how hardly they can be prevailed on to give up their favourite object whatever it be, how useless to try to attract them away from it by any other common sight or sound : observe all this, and then say quietly to yourself, Truly each one of these is preaching a sermon to me : one after another as I look on them they seem to cry out, O Christian, servant of the great King, engaged by Him to do His service with a happy eternity for thy promised wages, sent by Christ on a special errand of His, with only just time to do it in : entrusted by the Owner of the whole world with a portion of His goods, which however small will turn to thine endless gain, if it be but duly improved for the short time thou art in this place : how is it that thou goest on with so languid an air, so slowly, so irregularly, so unwillingly, now standing quite still, now hastening the wrong way, now going to sleep, now looking around and loitering, while we are every one of us so intent, so active in our poor earthly ways ? The very streets and shops, I say, of any large town, the fields and lanes of this or any other village on a morning in harvest, or in any other busy time, call aloud to us in words such as these, had we but the heart to listen to them : the very air of this busy

restless world is full of voices echoing our Lord's saying, "° The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

None of you surely can say, It does not concern me : I have no talent entrusted to me, no call, no special errand from God. Thou hast a body, my brother, and a soul ; thou hast senses, speech, understanding ; it is hard if thou dost not know the foundation at least of Christian knowledge, the Creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments : thou surely hast some one to love and care for, some one to whom thou canst do good : say not then, this is all a dead letter for me, but set to work at once, apply yourself immediately to make that use of your time, your property, your senses, which you know in your heart your Saviour intends you to make ; be thrifty in respect of these, your soul's opportunities : the less you have, the more diligence oughtest thou to use, in making the most of that little. For thy Saviour, thy soul's friend, has told thee plainly, that such as we are now in the least matters, such shall we prove hereafter in the very greatest. The boy of ten or twelve, in his work, and in his sport, commonly gives a true token and earnest of what he will turn out when he is grown up and entered on the serious business of life : so our thoughts, words, and actions here in this transitory life, are a sure token in the sight of the All-seeing, what manner of persons we are to prove in eternity. True it is, that even the most serious of our employments, in this world, and those which take us up most entirely, are as nothing in comparison of the



least degree of glory or of misery in that world. The greatest are nothing in comparison; yet the least is enough for trial. If there could be an emperor of the world, the effect of his might and counsel would be nothing, to set against the loss or gain of the soul of any one little child. And again, the half playful, half fretful child, which can but just know right from wrong, is as truly and really on his trial, so far as he *does* know, as the oldest and wisest of us all. An overpowering thought, surely, if we would but really take it to heart. Each one is even now this very moment, on his examination before the dreadful Judge. There is One Who really takes down all that we say, do, or think with consent of our will: it is all truly and really added to our account: poor as you may be, mean, simple or ignorant, yet so far as you do know right from wrong, you are sure to hear of it again on that day. God tries your honesty in matters that are worth but a few pence: He tries your charity in bearing of little affronts, hard words, unkind looks, rash sayings, uncivil neglects: if you cannot withstand such temptations as these, how, think you, can you be fit company bye and bye for the saints who are even now crowned in paradise for giving up all that they had, for enduring shame, pain, torture and death, and yet forgiving and loving their persecutors?

My brethren, there are two sayings of our Lord, as concerning what He meant us to learn by this parable of the unjust steward, which I wish we all thought of a great deal more than we do. One is, "the true riches." He asks, He, Who being Himself

Eternal, alone knoweth the true and eternal value of things ; He asks, " If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches ?" If you are not true, fair, and honest in these ordinary matters between yourself and your neighbour, how can you expect to be entrusted with that heavenly grace which will make you rich for ever ? The true riches, given through God's mercy in Christ as a reward for our faithfulness in these mean earthly things, are the very joy and glory of heaven itself, *that* joy and that glory, of which it is written, that when He was rich in it, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. There are treasures prepared for us in heaven, whereof all the gold and silver, all the lands and houses of this world are as mere a shadow, as the bread of our common meals is of Christ's Body, or the oil wherewith we feed our lamps, of the grace of His Holy Spirit. Alas ! that we should be so taken up with that which is unreal, a mere show, which will presently come to an end, that for its sake we willingly forget and forfeit the only true and abiding wealth. And to make it still more strange and lamentable, observe the other word which our Lord presently adds : " If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own ?" As much as to say, that after all, nothing here can be truly called our own : it is only lent for a short time, just to see how we will employ it : how can it be our own indeed, seeing we must so soon part from it ? We may call it *ours*, as little children call things their own which are put into their hands as

playthings for a time: but really and truly that only is ours, which we shall meet with in the other; the eternal part of our being: that which we have committed in faith and love to the keeping of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* is ours, and will be so for ever: but what we have stored up or laid out for ourselves, for the comfort and ornament of the few days we are to spend here, how should that be truly accounted ours, since it will cease to be any thing to us, at latest, when those few days are over? Surely, my brethren, if we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, our very self-love would make us self-denying. If we turned our minds in earnest to the great eternal things, which we daily profess to believe, we should for their sake most willingly and with all our hearts, give up more and more of these little and temporal things: we should not pride ourselves on them, nor quarrel about them, nor fret and complain for the want of them. God give us this true wisdom, in which, hitherto, we are most of us so sadly wanting: none more so, than those who think themselves wisest.

One thing more; I said just now, that the goods which are merely of this world will cease to be any-thing to us, when this world is over. And this is true, so far as that they will cease to be of any use to us. But in another sense they may still be a great deal to us, so far as they have been sinfully abused, they will turn into fearful evils in the world to come: as it is written in S. James, “<sup>d</sup> Your gold and your silver is cankered, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.”

<sup>d</sup> S. James v. 3.



Our time, our money, all that we call ours, is in reality His time and money, to Whom we ourselves belong. To Him we must account for all; for the moments which make up our life, the farthings which make up our property, the looks, and chance words, and ordinary thoughts and actions, which make up our daily life and conversation. None of them have passed away for ever: they will one day surely find us out. May it please Him that it be for good and not for evil: for pardon and not for eternal condemnation!

## SERMON XXVIII.

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### SELF-CONFIDENCE. I.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 COR. X. 12.

*“ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”*

IF one could go round this or any other Christian congregation, and ask people one by one what they think of their own eternal prospects, I suppose one should hardly meet with here and there one who either thought himself past hope of salvation, or would confess that he put the thought off from him altogether as too miserable and uncomfortable to be dwelt upon. At least nine persons out of ten, I am persuaded, would say that they had hope for themselves against the time when they die. Either they suppose that they never had any great need to repent, or that they have truly repented already, or that surely they will repent in earnest bye and bye. One way or another, almost every one expects to be saved: men have not, at the bottom, much real doubt and fear about the matter. Yet we know it is too true, that a great number, perhaps the

greater part, of grown up persons, professing and calling themselves Christians, will not be saved at last. I say, perhaps the greater part, because surely the sayings of our Lord Himself lead to that fearful thought. "Enter ye in," He says, "at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth unto destruction, and many there be that go in thereat, because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." This certainly sounds as if at the great Day only a few out of many will be at the Judge's Right Hand: and so also sounds that saying, repeated by our Lord more than once, "Many are called, but few chosen." This being so, it is surely the more remarkable that persons in general should be so well satisfied with their own spiritual condition. We almost all think we stand: yet He Who knows for certain has given notice that the greater part of us do not really and firmly stand: well then may the Apostle bid us take heed lest we fall, and well may we look about us in fear and trembling, like persons on the very edge of a dangerous precipice, considering where a fall would take us.

We think perhaps at present that we stand: we have no very serious misgivings; our hearts do not accuse us of deadly sin, or of separation from God. We fancy, that if we were taken off suddenly, we might be tolerably sure of obtaining mercy. How often does one hear people say this, that they are not afraid to die, they are ready to give in their account as soon as it may be called for, they have nothing in particular to lie heavy on their conscience. So they speak, whether sick or well, and very sad it



often is to hear them: for too often we are sure that their so speaking comes entirely from a certain deadness and hardness of their conscience: either they are boasting of a calm which they do not feel, or if they are inwardly satisfied with themselves, it is because they have no serious thought in them, what the end of sin is, or how bad their own sins are. They know in general and confess that sin is an evil thing and bitter, and must surely bring sorrow, but they have not pictured to themselves the heaviness of the sorrow: they have not spoken seriously to their own hearts of the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched. They have not laid it to heart what a thing it must be to go on for ever with the face of the Lord turned away from them: no faith, no hope, no love either of God or man: nothing but evil spirits around them and the reproaches of their own memory within them. If we considered in earnest what kind of thing a sad and miserable eternity must be, we should be less ready to congratulate ourselves, or lightly to imagine that we are quite safe against it. If we tried in earnest to hate all wilful sin, as being what separates immortal souls from God, we should not be so quickly contented with the little we have as yet done in getting the victory over it. Therefore, as I said, it is usually a sorrowful thing when we hear persons talk as if they were sure they stood, as if they knew not of anything particular needing repentance in them. It is generally a sign that they measure their own doings by some very different line from that by which God measures them.

Perhaps, when we so talk, we are without know-

ing it led astray by the opinions of our neighbours. Many a man contrives to go on with a fair character from all around him ; but God and His Angels, who see in secret, would give a very different account of him. To such our Blessed Saviour once said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves among men, but God knoweth your hearts : for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Many a man is kind and good-natured in relieving the helpless, and taking trouble for those in distress, who yet allows himself to be impure in heart, and take pleasure in evil thoughts, instead of turning them out of his mind with shame and penitence. Such an one is almost certain to be more highly praised and better thought on than he deserves. One would think indeed that he must himself be aware of the miserable blot in his Christian character : one would think he could scarce speak peace to his own soul : yet somehow so it is, that the heart is secretly enticed, flattered, and beguiled by those praises even, which a very little thought would shew are quite undeserved. The Evil spirit whispers, you cannot be so very bad, when so many, even good persons, agree to speak so well of you. And so in a blind sort of manner he persuades you that you may safely take some liberties, considering how much good you do in another way. We think we stand, because so many tell us so, and therefore we are less careful to avoid a fall, and so the fall comes : sometimes alas, how grievously ! This was perhaps part of the reason of that alarming saying of our Lord, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." To be generally praised, is greatly

against your souls, as in other respects, so in this, that you are greatly tempted to listen after this praise, and rest and depend on it, instead of really trying to find and amend what is amiss in yourself. We are well enough inclined to say of ourselves, We are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, while in fact we are in God's sight wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: how much more when the world about us is unhappily deceived in us, as we are deceived in ourselves, and when in some way or other we seem very often to hear our own praises! Surely in such case we have need to cry more earnestly than ever to our Lord and Saviour, that He would shew us truly to ourselves, and give us grace really to understand our own backslidings. We can hardly set ourselves a better rule than this: to try in earnest to make all praise a real punishment and vexation to us: and this will be, if we get into a way of recollecting, whenever we are praised, some one or more of the worst things we have ever done, and what we would least like our friends to know of. If a man would force himself to do this, if David for example, after his sad fall, never heard himself praised without calling it to mind, and inwardly humbling himself for it: who knows how much good such an exercise of repentance might do, not only *as* repentance, but also as a safeguard against the great danger of thinking oneself good because one is praised and thought well of?

This again is a snare to many persons, that having by God's mercy cured themselves of some one evil habit, they are too well satisfied; they do not watch



diligently against other temptations in different parts of their conduct, and so the devil gains on one side of them the advantage which he seemed to have lost on the other. You have left off, we will say, the sins of your youth, and that before the temptation had ceased, while you were yet in your health and strength: you have learned really to keep yourself in order, fearing for your precious soul. So far, so good: but do not too hastily make yourself easy, and think that now of course all is right. There is danger that in such an one the world may take place of the flesh, and he may get rid of his corrupt and base thoughts, only to fill his mind with care, and covetousness, and discontent. Therefore let him not be hasty to conclude that he stands, because he has recovered from one fall; let him still take heed, for indeed he is still in danger: his enemy is not yet tired out, he has not left off laying plots and snares against him, therefore neither must he on his side leave off watchfulness and prayer. To have fought one battle, to have gained one victory, is well: it is a great encouragement, a true token of God's gracious presence and favour; but so much the more lamentable will it be, if presuming on our advantage, we throw it away. Demas might as well or better have continued a heathen, as turn Christian and then forsake Christ for love of this present world. Therefore when we seem to have made some spiritual progress, to be in any respect better Christians than we were, let us indeed thank God and be glad at heart, but let it not for a moment make us less watchful, less afraid of our own selves. A brave soldier may well rejoice, when in the heat of

a fierce battle he perceives that his enemy has given way before him: but he will not therefore cease to look about him, and do his best to make the victory sure and complete: he knows that the tide may turn, and that it is his duty to be still doing his best, and not leave off until he hears his commander recalling him, and giving token that the day's work is done. So will the Christian soldier: he will stand fast in the place where his God has set him, prepared to resist, if need be, a second and third enemy after the first is put to flight. His seeming to himself now to stand will be to him a reason, not why he should be careless, but why he should take more and more heed against falling. He will say to himself, as was said to the Jews after they returned from their captivity, “<sup>a</sup> Now for a little space grace hath been shewed us from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape . . . for we were bondmen: yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us . . . And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou O God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this: should we again break Thy commandments? wouldest Thou not be angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us?”

I have mentioned two causes of fear which may well make a man careful and humble when he most seems to stand: one, that perhaps his measures may be imperfect, such as the praise of men or the like: the other that if he be better in some one or more respects it does not follow that he is improved alto-

<sup>a</sup> Ezra ix. 8, 9, 13, 14.

gether. I will now take notice of a third very serious matter; the danger we are in of leaving out of our account what are called sins of omission. You perhaps are inclined to hold your head high among Christians, and to imagine that all is well enough with you, because you are punctual in your devotions, public and private. But will you ask yourself in earnest, How you say your prayers? Are you careful to keep yourself attentive? Do you try seriously to recall your thoughts, when they accidentally wander? Do you vex and punish yourself, if you find this often happening? If you have time, do you force yourself to begin again, and attend better? If you do none of these things, if you go wandering on, well-pleased with your own prayers, doubtless you are one of those whom the Apostle especially warns. You think you stand, but take heed, I beseech you: a fall, a grievous fall, may be very near at hand. For of course you cannot stand a moment without God's special grace, and His grace is promised only to them that ask, and how can they be said really to ask it, who take no pains to think on it, even when they are on their knees saying their prayers to God for it?

I have mentioned this one point, not striving to set our heart upon our prayers, as a sin of omission, I fear a very common one, yet such, that a person guilty of it shall often go on without fear, without any particular doubt or anxiety as to his condition in the sight of God. Many others might be mentioned: such as not keeping our bodies in order by such fasting as our Lord recommends; not offering to Almighty God a due proportion of our worldly



substance, for His Church and for His poor: not being careful of our time, but letting it run away just as may happen: spiritual sloth and indevotion of every kind; the want of an earnest purpose to please God in *all* things. All these surely are very serious omissions: he that is guilty of them, one does not see how he can truly love and fear our Saviour: yet is it at all strange or uncommon for people to go on in such neglect, without any, the least suspicion that they are in a bad way? And think of the misery, the horror, of waking in the other world to a sad certainty that you have been throwing away your life, wilfully leaving undone those things which most needed to have been done. Think of the foolish virgins, how they came with their lamps in their hand, and found themselves too late, the Lord answering, "I never knew you:" because they neglected good works. Think of those who will plead in vain, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy Presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets: and He will say, Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." Think of those on the left hand, how they will be amazed when they are told that they have been going on in unkind, unmerciful ways towards our Blessed Saviour Himself. Think of the unprofitable servant, how when he thought perhaps to be praised for hiding his talent away safely, he was cast into outer darkness for not improving it. I have seen it somewhere noticed as a most serious and awful thought, that in the Scripture accounts of the Last Day the wicked are commonly represented as taken by surprise: as though even to the last moment they had gone on thinking they stood. May the fear of that moment

awaken us in time to do this much at least: in the purpose of our heart to give ourselves up, once for all, body and soul, to serve Him who gave Himself entirely for us. God give us grace to renew this holy purpose every time we say our prayers; to keep it steadily in our minds, whatever we do: then although perhaps we may always be more or less in doubt whether we stand, yet we may have the comfortable hope, that He is on our right hand, and we shall not finally fall.

## SERMON XXIX.

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### SELF-CONFIDENCE. II.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 COR. X. 12.

*“ Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”*

As often as we say the Litany, we beseech our Lord that it may please Him to strengthen such as do stand, to comfort and help the weak hearted, and to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet.

Now as we say this, many of us no doubt have felt the thought crossing their hearts, I wonder which of these classes I belong to? Am I one of those that stand, or of the weak hearted, or of the fallen, who need to be raised? And along with the question comes as quickly, almost before one is aware, a sort of answer from people's own conscience, telling them of which sort they are. Every one has in the bottom of his heart some kind of notion how he himself stands towards God: and such a prayer as that now mentioned, if people really attend to it, does for the time, at least in many persons, call up that notion,



and cause them in a manner to pass judgement upon themselves.

Now, I want just now to consider particularly the case of those who on such occasions are inclined to pass a favourable sentence on themselves: who in their secret hearts think they stand: who are not particularly afraid of their own weakness, nor ashamed of any sad fall. Whether there be many or few (I should suppose there were a good many, but) surely some such there will be in every ordinary congregation of Christians: and I beseech them to observe, that to every one of them without exception the same word is spoken. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. The Apostle doth not say, let him that imagines, or dreams, or flatters himself that he standeth, take heed lest he fall but universally, Let those who think they stand, whether they are right in such thoughts or no, let them take heed lest they fall. You hear of various sorts of Christians, some standing firm and upright, by God's mercy, in the place where He had set them when He made them members of Himself: others weak-hearted and tottering, and ready to fall: others again who have actually fallen, and have not yet risen again, you hear of these three sorts, and your own heart seems to tell you that you are one of the first: you know nothing very particular against yourself; you have no distressing fear about your own latter end. Well, *if* it be so indeed, *if*, your heart do not deceive you, you are happy indeed; happy for the present; but you are not yet safe. You have need of perseverance and in order to it, you have need of continual care and watchfulness and devotion. You

think you stand, i. e. you think that you have a very great and special blessing of Almighty God. O then, how anxious ought you to be, how constant, how tender, how scrupulous, in guarding and cherishing that good and precious thing. Day and night, morning and evening, in leisure and in business, how fearful ought you to be of ever forgetting your treasure. You think you stand, then surely you are without excuse, if you are not continually taking heed lest you fall.

Perhaps the reason why you think you stand is, that you try to be regular and dutiful in your prayers, and in other holy ordinances; more especially in waiting on the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ: and that God permits you, from time to time, to taste His miraculous sweetness there, to rise from your knees, or return from His Altar, with a thankful heart, and joy in Him. This is indeed a great blessing, and most real and comfortable ground of hope, *if it be accompanied with Christian care and watchfulness*; but alas! it is certain by dismal experience, that there is great fear of men's deceiving themselves in this matter. When Satan beholds any soul really delighting to be with Christ in His Sacraments, he presently seeks to put it into his heart to value himself upon that good feeling, and sometimes, miserable to think, beguiles him even into secret and deadly sin, yet all the while persuading him, that surely he stands, surely his faults, whatever they are, are not mortal sins, else how could he so delight himself in God? And even when nothing so fearful as this takes place, yet who shall say how sadly men's devotion is ble-

mished by their merely permitting themselves to have complacent thoughts of it? I beseech you then, by that mercy of God, which alone could ever enable you to have real comfort and joy in your prayers and Communions, I beseech you, never, never allow yourselves to think you stand, without at the same time beseeching God to make you very much afraid of falling: and the more delight you seem to find when present with God in religious ordinances, so much the more jealously watch yourselves and fear exceedingly, lest some unclean spirit enter in unawares, and defile that soul to which He had vouchsafed to draw so near.

I have mentioned persons of keen devotional feelings, as especially likely to be tempted by the thought that they stand: I will now say a word of exactly the opposite sort, the ordinary, cold, every day sort of Christians, who take no constant pains to pray in earnest, and therefore, it may be feared, they are in God's sight as if they never prayed at all. Strange as it may seem, I believe it is quite true, that these also, generally, think they stand. They do not, in the bottom of their hearts, really fear for their own souls. They have for years and years gone on in a way of imagining that all is right, that they are in a safe course, and they turn a deaf ear to all that can be said against it. When they chance to hear or read anything which urges to be more in earnest, to look deeper into their accounts, to see that they have not made some fatal mistake, they settle the matter at once by saying, This is but the strict way of such and such a clergyman, or other adviser, they are sure they need not attend to it,



they are going on as well as others, in short, they are determined to think they stand. Well then, here is the holy Apostle taking such people at their word, as though he said to them, You think you stand: I wish it may be so, but this at any rate is plain, that what is said to the highest and devoutest saints has need also to be said to you. Take heed lest ye fall. Are you really doing so? Are you really taking heed? Among the many scores and hundreds who meet the warnings of their pastors with cool indifference, because, as they say, it does not signify, they are sure they are going on well enough for the present, how many are there, who have this chance at least of standing, that they take daily and hourly pains not to fall lower than they are already? You refuse to come to Church oftener, you care not to come to the Holy Communion, because, as it is, you think you stand: you do not see but you are good enough to be saved by God's mercy and the merits of our Blessed Lord, though you should die just as you are. Well, but at least then you should take heed, that you become not worse than you are. At least you should be always watching and guarding your own ways, always seeking for grace from God, to preserve you in what you suppose your safe condition. Where is this watchfulness? How does it appear in your life? How earnestly do you say your prayers in the morning, that you may go on at least as well as you have done, and not be tempted into fresh sins? How often do you seriously consider beforehand, what trials, what enticements to do wrong, what discouragements in plain duties, are likely to befall you

that day: and resolve by God's grace, that you will not give way to them? How often at night, do you sum up the doings of the day, humbling and punishing yourself for what has been done amiss, and praying that you may not fall to-morrow? If you do nothing of this kind, if you rather let matters take their course, saying day by day, O, I daresay some things may be wrong, but I trust and hope that on the whole I am not in such a bad way: see how you are treating your God. You think you stand: i. e. you think that by His grace you have been hitherto kept sufficiently upright: He then speaks as plainly to you, as if He called to you out of heaven by your name, and says, If you think you stand, you must take heed, you must watch and pray, else you will be sure to fall: and if you will not take heed, you will not watch and pray, you will just do as you have always done, or as other people do, and take your chance of being safe. It is too plain what the end must be. If no deadly, open, crying sin be permitted to get the dominion over you, at best your condition will be like that of a boat left in a tide or stream without oar or sail, or any one who can guide it. The boat may seem to rock quietly in the same place, but when a person in it, after a time, begins to look around and consider where he is, he will find himself far and far away from the point where he had intended to remain. So such an indolent, ordinary, unloving Christian, as I have been now speaking of, will find too late, that while he was thinking he stood, and taking no heed lest he fall, he has sunk down without knowing it far beneath his first level. This, I suppose, is

what Holy Scripture properly means by the word backsliding; a continual, silent, gradual departure from God, of which the person himself is often not aware, until he find himself in the other world, and the great impassable gulph fixed between him and all hope of mercy. Oh miserable, heartbreaking thought, that so many of those for whom Christ died should be going fast on to this extreme of wretchedness, simply because they think they stand, and will not hear the merciful warning, Take heed lest ye fall.

Many and various are the snares, by which the Evil one insensibly beguiles men to be thus contented with their own ruin. A great many think they stand, because on comparison they find or fancy themselves a little better, at least outwardly, than the greater part of their neighbours: others, because they have reformed in one or more particulars. They are better than their former selves: why then should they doubt that they are good enough? Or perhaps they depend upon some one special point of duty, in which their conscience tells them they are really blameless: one will make much of his constant unwearied waiting upon his parents, another of his faithfulness as a servant, another of his care of his family, another counts himself safe because he is strictly honest, another because he is sober: and so of the rest. But the Word of God says to them one and all, Take heed lest ye fall: beware of so depending on these things as to neglect other dangers and duties: be sure that neither in these, nor in any other duty can you stand upright for a moment without the special grace of God: nor can



you have that grace without prayer; and what sort of prayers are these which you daily offer, so well pleased as you are with yourselves, so little inclined to think of your latter end, so unwilling to believe that your souls can be in any real danger?

Take heed lest ye fall: but what is really "taking heed?" You may imagine a steep and dangerous path and persons walking along it who have no strength of their own, and do not well know the way, if they fall so as that they cannot be helped up again, to the right or to the left, it is certain death: but if they lean wholly on their guide, and go exactly where he bids them, they will not only come safe to their journey's end, but each will have a precious and glorious reward, according to his doings and sufferings, more or less. Now then, if a friendly voice called aloud to such travellers, Take heed lest ye fall, would not they well understand what it meant? Would they not feel that it was a warning to them, not to be looking about and minding other things, when their eyes should be straight before them: lest they should stumble on some unseen impediment, and fall, and perhaps rise no more? Would they not feel it inexcusable for them to be tempted after such a warning to lean very much over on the right side or on the left, whatever beautiful things were to be seen, lest they should lose their balance, and be cast away. Would they not feel that they must keep themselves awake, and not give way to slothful or weary inclinations? Above all, would they not feel, that they must not, they dare not, go on at random, as if they were sure of fulfilling their course in safety, whether they

attended to every step or no? Whatever else is right or wrong, this they would surely perceive and acknowledge in their hearts, that it must be right to ponder the paths of their feet, to be very strict and careful in their doings, and wrong to neglect them, and leave them to their own chance.

Are we taking heed in this manner? When we wake in the morning, do we use to feel as persons on a dangerous and difficult journey, or rather as persons who are at home and in safety, and only wish to be let alone, that they may go on quietly in their own way? Do we feel as if we could take care of ourselves, or as if we could not stir a step without an unseen arm to lean upon? What are our thoughts through the day? Do we let them come and go as they will, as not apprehending any great harm in ourselves, and trusting that all will come right at last? Or do we try to guard and direct them, as in God's presence, lest they prove displeasing to Him? When evening comes, do we lie down contented with ourselves, taking for granted that all is well enough? Or do we seriously think the day over, to see that we have not fallen, and if we have to pray and strive that we may be raised up! Do we go through our business as if there were no danger in it? Or do we watch against the evil spirits of covetousness, envy, anger, sloth? In our repose and diversions, do we take for granted that all is safe, or are we on our guard against all excess, all thoughts which may stain the soul?

But, you will say, all this is calling on us to lead a very strict life indeed. My brethren, put the question, I beg of you, fairly to your own hearts:

Has anything more been now required of you, than the Holy Spirit requires, when He bids you "take heed lest ye fall." Turn the words over and over in your mind: what can they mean less, than that *every* Christian *should* lead a strict life: that every one, who has received the grace of Christ, *should* watch over it as a precious treasure? It is the plain meaning of the Bible: you cannot change it: O that you would be wise, and thankfully accept and obey it, that it may be your joy, and not your condemnation, at the Day of Judgement!



## SERMON XXX.

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### OUR WEAKNESS, GOD'S STRENGTH.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. ii. 12. 13.

*“ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*

WHEN a thoughtful Christian wakes up in the morning and begins to recollect himself, where he is, and what he is about, well may he stand amazed at the greatness of the work he has to do, and the little strength he has to do it. If it were the beginning of a day of battle or of a day in which one had to stand a trial for one's life, we should all of us, I suppose, or nearly all, have this feeling. It would be a kind of agony to us; left to ourselves, we should feel quite overwhelmed and oppressed with what was coming.

Now, every day rightly considered, is a day of battle, a day of trial for one's life. Religious persons know this, and endeavour to frame their minds accordingly, the first thing when they awake. They look around and say in their hearts, Here is God's

blessed light once more breaking in upon me, and in what condition does it find me? Thanks be to His goodness, I am not yet in hell: I am not in the horror of great and eternal darkness, where I have long ago deserved to be: but still how great is my task! I have a load of past sins to repent of, a crowd of present temptations to guard against: every day, hour, minute, added to my life brings with it its own duty, and I am bound to attend to all. I have proud and high thoughts to put down, greedy or unclean desires to chasten and to mortify, unkind or fretful fancies to drive away, bad habits to break, and good ones to practise myself in: I have prayers to say and to think upon while I am saying them: I have good resolutions to make; I have to examine myself, how I have kept past good purposes; I have to prepare myself for death, and for the last great day: besides the earthly and temporal duties of my calling, which I am bound to perform to God's glory and the good of my brethren.

Surely unless persons are very thoughtless indeed, they must have some such impressions as these, concerning the greatness of their daily work when they look round them on first waking up in the morning: and must not other thoughts come with these, of the little strength they have of their own, to do so great a work with?

Alas! we know too well, most of us, by reflecting on our yesterday, how we are likely to spend our to-morrow. We know too well how pitiably weak and foolish and cowardly we are, in doing things which we know to be right: how hard we find it to set ourselves good rules, and keep to them: how

quickly and readily, when the time comes, we invent all manner of excuses for falling away from our best and most distinct resolutions: how many mean, base, abominable things we have delighted in and how trifling, as yet, has been our contrition and repentance. All this we naturally think of more or less, every morning: how then can we but fear and tremble, comparing the task we have to accomplish with ourselves who have to accomplish it? The devil and his angels, we know, will all this day be arrayed against us: the flesh will spread her snares, the wicked world will laugh and persecute: we have to fight with them, as it were, on the edge of a bottomless pit: there is but a hairs-breadth between us and eternity. And who is sufficient for those things? Not one. Not one of Adam's sinful children, left to himself, can go on a single day. Well therefore may the feeling of utter helplessness be the first feeling which possesses a Christian's heart, when he finds himself more conscious of his God's Presence and of his own heavy task, and if this were all, well might he lie down in despair.

But, God be thanked, this is not all. The same God Who makes us feel that He is present to watch us, makes us also aware that He is present to help us. He humbles us to the dust, in the consciousness that we cannot do any thing that is good, without Him. But at the same time, He permits and teaches us to pray for His Spirit that by Him we may be enabled to live according to His Will.

Those who have ever prayed at all must I should think have felt this before now: that the many pressing duties and the awful chance of losing their



souls for ever, coming over them in a morning, before they begin their day's work, would be quite too much for them, were they not allowed to kneel down and help themselves by prayer. Prayer, sincerely and humbly said, has had an immediate effect, in calming the crowd and hurry of their troublesome thoughts, and enabling them to trust in God, and so helping them to be much more at peace, when they rose up from their knees, than when they first fell down. And the sweet fragrance of this early morning help has abode with them through the whole day, and enabled and encouraged them to do things which would else have been far too hard for them.

And not only in the morning, and in our set prayers, but at all times of the day or night, and in all our pursuits and doings in the world and in the Church, you shall find if you examine it, a like mixture of these two things, lowliness because we can do nothing without Him and faith that in Him we may do all things. Thus in the Communion service, the commandments may well alarm us telling us as in a voice of thunder what the Lord would have us do, and bringing us low on our knees to beseech Him to have mercy upon us, and to incline our hearts to keep that law. But the Creed, the Nicene Creed, which, as you know, comes very soon after the commandments, this may assure a man and comfort him again, declaring what miraculous things God has done for us, as one commandment comes thundering after another, and our hearts die down within us, and accuse us before our God of the sad and shameful breach of that law: what could we do, how could we bear it, had we not also the most

gracious promises that if we seek Him earnestly we shall find Him, ready not only for Christ's sake to forgive the past, but also by His good Spirit, to work in us for the time to come? Who could bear the thought of the Judgement-day as of a reality, if he had not the hope of the Holy Ghost abiding within him, to be to him, a true Comforter in that last and most dreadful of days?

Suppose again a Christian partaking of either of God's great Sacraments. Here again a tender and sincere conscience will humble and comfort a man at one and the same moment. What a great thing is a sacramental vow, a promise made in God's especial Presence and sealed, as it were, with His Seal, with some peculiar blessing! But it is also full of anxiety: it is so very sacred: how are we ever to perform it? To renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh: to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, to keep all God's holy commandments, and walk in them as long as you live! Surely, a man might think, It is too much: who dare pledge himself to such things, so high and heavenly? Nay, but hearken what is said, concerning such things: S. Paul speaking of what he is in himself says, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." Yet here to the Philippians the same S. Paul writes, "God worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." The baptismal vow could not be kept, were it not for the baptismal gift. But with that gift it may be kept. Those two short but most solemn words, "I do," when they are uttered in Confirmation, what a quantity of meaning they have! But the Holy Ghost Who is given in Con-

firmation will enable us to keep them. The promises and vows in Holy Matrimony are very hard, very searching; but the blessing of the Holy Trinity received with them will surely help men to keep them. Above all, who does not feel the deep sacredness, the fearful importance of the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ? But here also, God bestows grace to endure (if I may say so) the weight of the blessing; the Holy Spirit Who comes down from heaven to give us the unspeakable Gift and prepare us for it, He will not fail to be with us afterwards, that we may not forfeit the same Gift.

Thus it is in all the Sacraments. What we do is nothing, for what can be easier than eating, and drinking, and washing? Yet we dare promise every thing. Why? Because we depend altogether, not on any doings of our own, but on His free and bountiful gift. Our own nothingness is set against Christ's sufficiency, the one to overwhelm, the other to support us: and so it is all through the Christian life. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me;" "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Without Him we cannot do any thing that is good, but by Him we may be enabled to live according to His will: nay, we shall assuredly be so enabled if we humbly and heartily desire it. For He is the God that heareth prayer, the Father, Who will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

Now I suppose there may be some here present, who have hitherto been too easy in very imperfect not to say sinful practices, under a blind sort of notion that it was wrong indeed, but they could not



help it and they hoped God would be merciful. Sins of the flesh, drunkenness, gluttony, unchastity, are too lightly passed over in many people's self-examinations. So is wrath and immoderate anger. So are sloth and indolence, and too much carefulness for the things of this life. In one or other of those respects, very many of us deceive ourselves, not considering the Lord's Body, i. e. not considering what strength and grace Christ imparted to them, when He made them members of His mystical Body, the Church. To will, they say, is present with me, I would fain be good and pure if I could: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. To such, the holy Apostle seems to say, Nay, my brethren, deceive not yourselves, you may work out your own salvation if you will. You may cleanse your hands and purify your hearts: the Voice of God expressly calls on you to do so. For why? It is not so much you that work, but it is God that worketh in you. God the Holy Ghost came down at your Baptism, to dwell in these frail hearts and vile bodies of yours, to give them a life and power which they had not before. There is now no more occasion for you to cry out, "The good that I would, I do not, and the evil which I would not, that I do." Those words, so far as they express wilful delight in sin, are for the heathen and unregenerate, not for such as Christ has made members of Himself. In regard indeed of imperfections and sins of infirmity, the best of men, even the saints, may well have occasion to use those words, and complain of the struggle within them, their willing and not doing: but not in respect of wilful sins: not in respect of bad habits known

and indulged : if any among us Christians continue under such dominion the fault is not in our condition, but in our corrupt will.

For only consider but for one moment what those words mean, "It is God that worketh in you." Endeavour to have but so much faith in the power of the great Almighty God, as all manner of workmen have in the machinery and engines which they use. You want we will say, to lift on high some very heavy weight, no man can do it, it is far beyond any number of persons' unassisted power : do you therefore give up the task, and let it lie useless on the ground ? No ; you have faith in the ropes and blocks, and pullies and other contrivances whereby Providence has enabled men to do things of that sort, far beyond their own strength ; you have no doubt that in that manner you may make your own little strength go a very great way, so that a little child may raise a weight which many strong men could not move, and so you make the trial and the work goes on and is done. Now apply this to your own case. You want to raise up your earthly soul and body, pressed down by many infirmities and sins, to the place where God and His Angels are, to the very heaven of heaven. How are you to do so great a work ? You cannot of yourself : but you may by that help which He has provided. You cannot do any thing that is good without Him, but by Him, if you desire it, you shall be enabled to live according to His Will. Only wish in earnest to be good, do not merely profess to wish it : do not merely sigh now and then over your own sad condition, and look wistfully at others whom you suppose to be better, and say, Would to God you were like

them : but wish and pray to be so. He Who gives you the first faint wish, will strengthen and enlarge the same into a settled good purpose of heart, if only you will encourage it. As He hath wrought in you to will, that is, to have the first beginning, the tender seed of goodness and grace, so He will work in you to do, if you will really apply to Him and cast yourself on Him. He will help you by such degrees and in such measure, as He sees best. To-day, perhaps by His grace, you will sin less than you did yesterday : to-morrow if you rightly employ that grace, you will do virtuously instead of sinning : the day after, you will do yet more virtuously, and so on, until of His great goodness you are really converted from sin to holiness, and have only to go on from strength to strength, from good to better, and from better to best.

But let it all be with fear and trembling. Be very much on your guard against that gay and confident spirit, which would cause you to behave as if you could go right by yourself : as if you were now so settled in goodness, that you need not be at the trouble of continual watching, self-denial and prayer. This has been the ruin of hundreds, who for a long time had run well. It has turned them back from the very door-way of heaven.

If you make a good beginning, you are almost sure to be tried in this way before long. Men will praise you, or the tempter will come secretly to you, and will say, 'Well and nobly done : now indeed you may take heart : surely now, for a time at least you are out of the reach of danger, and need only thank God and be cheerful.' But do not you suffer yourself to be flattered : turn a deaf ear to him at once :



fear everything that would cause you to cease from fear and trembling.

It is not, observe, a slavish and cowardly fear, which Holy Scripture bids you practise: it is a deep reverential sense of the Presence of God the Holy Ghost in your heart and conscience, your soul and body. Fear and tremble, for it is God that worketh in you. Will you not tremble at His Presence within you, as much and more than as much, as God's servants of old time trembled when they beheld His Angels? and surely to know by faith that He is within you, is more awful a great deal than to see His messenger near you with your bodily eyes.

Again, will you not fear and tremble at the thought, What if after all I should fail, even while Almighty power is close at hand, and most willing to save me? It is like a person leaning over a steep precipice, but held firm by a friendly and unfailing hand. Of course such an one would fear and tremble at the notion of letting that hand go: he would try to hold it faster and faster: and so should we, held up as we are over the precipice of eternity by the Arm of Almighty God, and by that alone. Think it not hard to go on all your time fearing and trembling in this way. It will make you cling closer to your Saviour: and that which keeps us nearest to Him is surely the most comfortable as well as the safest way. Be not too gay, nor yet at all desponding: fear and tremble, but still work cheerfully on, and then as your day, so will your strength be; your trials inward and outward may be heavy: but He will somehow bring you through: by that good will and pleasure of His, which caused Him to be born and die for you.

## SERMON XXXI.

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### JERUSALEM REFUSING TO BE GATHERED.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATT. xxiii. 37.

*“How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”*

WE are reminded in the Gospel to-day of our Saviour's sad and solemn warning to Jerusalem; how at His last entry therein, when every thing about Him seemed more joyful and encouraging than we read of in any other part of His ministry, He beheld the city, and wept over it, looking onward to its sad downfall.

This was most likely on the Sunday in the week of His death: and two days after, on the Tuesday, He ended His last teaching in the temple with a tender and grave farewell to the incorrigible city, now on the point of finally rejecting Him. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,

and ye would not!" Words which our Lord had uttered once before, overcome in a manner by His deep compassion for the wicked city, which He knew would not repent.

It is as if He had said, "You know, all the world knows, what loving care I have taken of this unhappy people: and that there may never be wanting somewhat to put them and you, My whole Church, in mind of it, I will shew you what it is like: It is like a hen gathering her chickens under her wings: like that wonderful instinct in dumb creatures, especially in birds, which all men see and admire."

The difference is, that the chickens, the young of the birds, come when they are called by their parent: they acknowledge her loving care, and their own duty: but Jerusalem, God's own people, doth not so. "I would have gathered thy children together, but ye would not."

As often then as we see that common sight, a hen taking care of her young brood, we see something which our Blessed Saviour has expressly made a token of Himself; and as often as we see how obediently the young ones come at every call of their mother, so often we see what may put us to shame for neglecting as we do the many calls of our Saviour. Let us consider these things a little more at large.

One of the first things which strikes young children, as they begin to grow up and look abroad in the world, is the wonderful parental instinct, as it is called, of dumb creatures, that secret and silent law which makes the mother of every animal almost so earnestly and affectionately watch over her offspring. Now here our Saviour teaches us, that this instinct



in not only put into their hearts by Him, but that it is actually a sign and token from Him, a pledge and visible shadow of the peculiar mercy with which He watches over His Church. Look to the whole history of God's ancient people, Israel. It is nothing from beginning to end but a course of these parental providences.

This is the Lord's own account of it in the Book of Deuteronomy: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him." So God went with the children of Israel, now before and now behind them, leading them the way, pointing out where they should rest, and how obtain supplies for their thirst and hunger, putting Himself between them and their enemies.

And it is much the same afterwards, through the whole history of the Old Testament. Every where the Lord offers to gather them under His wings. His promises are repeated to Saul, to David, to Solomon, to the Prophets: there is no good thing which He does not offer, if only they will obey His commandments.

Nay, and as the last and saddest part of the history comes on, that part which we are now reading in the daily lessons, when their sins forced the Almighty to cast them off for a while, to give their city and His temple to be burned, and themselves to be carried away captive to Babylon: then did His tender care and love shine forth more than ever. What is the whole book of Jeremiah but a continuation of calls over and over, Why will ye not "come unto Me,

that ye may have life?" Why will ye not "repent and turn yourselves from your transgressions, that iniquity may not be your ruin?" Why will ye not "be gathered under My wings?"

Thus is it all through the history of God's ancient people; and it is just the same, had men faith and skill to perceive it, in the history of His new people, the Church, since our Lord's coming.

But for us it is easier to see and understand how truly this comparison of the hen describes His mercy to each of us one by one. First, our mother's love, that earliest and sweetest kindness that we are permitted to taste on earth. Whence comes it? Is it not altogether God's gift? He is "our God, even from our mother's womb:" He was "our hope when we hanged yet upon our mother's breasts:" that is, whatever our mothers did for us, and whatever love it was in their heart to shew us, God alone put it in their heart: it was but a drop from the overflowing fountain of His love.

And again, what shall we say of our spiritual mother, the Church? Who can count the number of the fourth part of the graces and loving-kindnesses which He through her is ever bestowing upon us? In causing us to be born of Christian parents, and to be gathered under His wings by Holy Baptism, before we could think or do any thing for ourselves: in feeding us afterwards with the food convenient for us; teaching us the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, instructing us to kneel down and lift up our hands to Him in prayer; using us to come to His house, to read and learn His Scriptures, to give thanks to Him before and after meals: all these are instances

of His gathering fatherly care of us, going before any thing we could do for ourselves: like what the mother bird does for her little ones before they can even leave the nest.

Next, when Christ gives His blessing in Confirmation, supplying strength to walk by ourselves, this is like the hen leading her brood off the nest, and shewing them how they should move, yet not so as at all to lose sight of them, or cease to care for them any moment.

And whereas the parent bird has always her particular call, inviting the little ones to their proper food as often as she finds any for them, is not this what Christ says to us continually, inviting us to the Holy Communion, which is the meat and drink of our souls: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden:" "Come unto Me, that ye may have life:" "Come unto Me, all ye that are hungry, and be filled with My fruits:" "Come eat of My Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have mingled:" "All that My Father giveth Me shall come unto Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

When the young birds hear the cry of their mother, telling them where they must come for food, they do not make excuses, and look another way; they make haste to obey it. How is it that Christians are so backward to come where Jesus Christ offers to feed them: opening not His wings, but His very heart: having His Side pierced on purpose, that there might be room for us to enter in and dwell there? But we "will not come unto Him that we might have life."



And yet He for our lives spared not His own; but as in another parable He says of Himself, that as a Good Shepherd He would meet the wolf, and lay down His life for the sheep, so in what He says of the hen we are reminded of the remarkable courage of mother birds (generally so timid) when their young is in danger. The hen, which will ordinarily be scared by almost any sound, will face much larger and more dangerous animals, and even birds of prey, and not mind putting herself in peril, when she sees the chickens threatened. So did the meek Lamb of God, for the salvation and protection of His unworthy family. He met and rebuked the devourer. He patiently submitted Himself to the worst that evil men and evil angels could do to Him. He became as a man that hath no strength, as a criminal that hath no answer, and in whose mouth are no rebukes: and so He quietly endured all for us.

• Very wonderful and affecting is the motherly courage and patience of the hen and of other animals watching their young. Why? Because He puts it in their heart, Who is the fountain of all love and pity: He, Who put Himself forward in our place, to receive all the malice of the devil. When we see those animals, and praise their instinct, let us remember to think of Him, and praise Him in our hearts: let the sight put us to shame, for forgetting Him so inexcusably as the best of us too often do: let it make us more courageous, to give up our own little comforts for our brethren's sake, that is, for Christ's sake.

But our Lord's words remind us of one particular action of the mother bird, the spreading her wings

to receive and shelter her young ones, when they want warmth, or rest, or protection. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" So the Holy Dove, the Spirit of Christ, comes down and broods over the waters of Baptism, over the souls and bodies of those who are there to be new born, or having been so, come to Him continually for more and more warmth, strength, and life. Christ by His Holy Spirit broods over them, sheltering, warming, quickening, doing all that they need.

And in order to do this, observe, He *gathers* them. He does not brood over us singly and apart, each one of us to have life from Him alone, but it is one warmth, one strength, one life, which He imparts to the whole family of Christians. He *gathers* us, that we may have life: gathers us into His holy Church. It is there that His wings are spread: other places have no promise of the same heavenly and life-giving shadow. If we proudly or unkindly stand off, if we will not come *with our brethren* to be sheltered and cherished beneath His wing, we cannot be sheltered and cherished there at all. As far as in us lies, we do by such behaviour tell our Lord that we can do without Him: and what then can we expect, but that He should leave us to ourselves?

This, this it is, Christian brethren, that too well accounts for the sad difference between the words and promises of the Scripture, and the state of the Church, such as we see it with our eyes. "I would have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." There would have been nothing at all wanting in the way

of care, cherishing, protection, nourishment, warmth, life, love, blessing: *But ye would not.* All My part was done: it remained but for you to accept the blessing: but you refused: and now you begin to feel the consequence: now the world, which steady obedience on your part would have turned into paradise again, is altogether embittered and blighted to you by the effects of your past sins.

The Psalmist tells the sad history, the history of too many of us, in a few words. "My people would not hear My voice, and Israel would not obey Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations. O that My people would have hearkened unto Me; for if Israel had walked in My ways, I should soon have put down their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. . . . Their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest wheat-flour, and with honey out of the stony rock should I have satisfied thee."

Thus did the greatest part of the Jewish people in all times: Christ, Who was ever present with them, though invisible, would have gathered them under His wings, and they would not. Thus is it with the greater part of us now; with almost all, I fear, in many of their sayings and doings. They will not come, or, what is more, will not remain under the shadow of Christ's wing, therefore "their house is left unto them desolate," they live in a dreary, helpless, unprotected condition, nothing to guard them against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Young people, for example, refuse to be taught: week after week, month after month, year after year,



the Church by her ministers invites them to submit to discipline, to come obediently and reverently, both to be instructed and ordered by the minister, until such time as they can answer with understanding all the questions in the Church Catechism, and then she offers them the unspeakable gift, the blessing of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation; and, to crown all, most lovingly invites them to the blessed and holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. How many of our young people accept this invitation cordially? How many come dutifully for our instructions? How many become communicants in due time? How many persevere in good ways when they have begun? This, surely, is very like our Saviour's offering to gather, and Jerusalem refusing. And if it goes on so, what can we look for but desolation?

Yet, though it is bad, young people refusing to be taught; surely it is still worse, sinners refusing to be converted. Christ's mercy is so great, as to spread its healing and sheltering wings to those even, who have long gone on despising it, and have run away from beneath its shadow. He still calls on them most earnestly to return, still offers them, though with chastening, repentance and salvation. The offer is made to all grievous sinners, but seldom indeed, to the best of man's judgement, is it accepted. Very many refuse to repent at all, going obstinately on in the counsels of their own hearts. Many, again, of those who do in a way repent, yet miss a great blessing by choosing their own way of repentance, setting their own chastisement, absolving themselves, instead of seeking for the Church's absolution. Christ

would have gathered them under His wings, to be saved with the rest of His Holy Catholic Church; but they choose to be saved, as it were, singly, each one in a way of his own. It is a wonder then, surely, if they are ever saved at all.

Few, indeed, by comparison, are they, who from the beginning, resisting the evil spirit of undutifulness, came at the Lord's call to hide themselves under His wing, and continue with Him, in the way of simple child-like obedience. Very few, but most happy are they; and as it is in the power of all, who have not yet grievously sinned, to be of that happy number: so there is no knowing how near even penitents may approach to it, if they begin immediately, and persevere courageously. But there is not, depend on it, there is not a moment to be lost.

## SERMON XXXII.

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### THE VISITATIONS OF OUR LORD.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xix. 44.

*“Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”*

To visit, we know, is to come and see. A Bishop's Visitation, is his coming to see how the clergy and people are going on, much the same as an inspection, when there is a regiment of soldiers, and an officer comes from head quarters to inspect, that is, to look well into it, and see whether all the rules of the service are observed: or in our Church schools, when the Bishop sends a clergyman to examine the classes, and report to him in what condition he finds everything, this is in fact visiting the regiment or the school, and so in a prison, or a hospital for those who are deranged, or in any other public establishment of the kind, you know that from time to time magistrates or others must come and look well over it, else there would be small chance of its going on well.

And it is here as in almost every thing else: these ordinary and outward visitations are so many types



and tokens of the inward and unseen dealings of Almighty God with His Church and with our souls: especially of that greatest and final visitation, when He will come to judgement, to separate the good from the bad for ever, when the King will come in to see the guests, when the wheat shall be parted from the tares, the good fish from the bad, when the books will be opened and balanced, and the great account once for all closed and made up. That it will be so, we certainly know, but the day and hour we know not: the Father hath put it in His own power, as He hath also the times and the seasons of each merciful and awful interference, whereby in the mean time He comes invisibly to His whole Church or to each one of us. He knows how long to wait, when to strike, and when to bless: even as our masters and rulers here are the only judges when to shew themselves and examine the state of the concerns under their care; when to come and look into things, how long to wait and leave them to themselves: what amount of trial to allow, at what moment, and in what manner, to bring matters to a point. So it is with families and governments here, and so it is with our Lord's universal family and government of the world and the Church. That He will visit, we know for certain: but when, and how, we know not. Now this of course puts persons under a very special probation and trial. Suppose a large family of servants, and the master or mistress away for an uncertain time. Each one knows that they will be back at some moment or other, and how he himself would wish to be employed when they come. But of the very time, all are alike ignorant. It is our Lord's

own parable: "The Son of Man is as a man traveling into a far country, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh: at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly, He find you sleeping." You perceive that in that house each one of the servants is put in an especial manner on his trial. And so it is in a school of boys or girls when the master or mistress happens to be away for a time: each one of the children presently begins to shew what is in his heart, whether he wishes to be dutiful and obedient or no. Or you may imagine any gathering of workmen or of soldiers, when those who employ or control them are absent for a time: it is a special occasion for proving their discipline and their honesty. And it will be taken in a great many different ways. Some out of the number will be entirely forgetful: so childish, that in a short time it will go quite out of their minds that their lord is one day to come back. They will give themselves over to the pleasure or profit of the hour, and will be as if they had no account to render at all. Many such there will be, our Lord tells us, towards the end of the world, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building, as if they were sure things would never come to an end, and some will be worse than this, unbelieving and insolent; Do not tell us, they say, of the Master coming back, we know better than that, something will be sure to happen: He never will return. Why, people all along have been

talking of His return, and He has never returned yet, neither will He: care not for Him, for you will never see Him again. Thus they run on, being in fact the very scoffers whom the Apostle speaks of, who were to come in the last age, walking after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Others there are less profane but equally reckless, they do not deny that what you say is right, but their line, their course, is taken the other way: they say in a manner with some in the Prophet Jeremiah, "There is no hope, none, for we have followed sinners, and after them will we go." A very great number are unsteady, for a while believing, but falling away in time of temptation: like the corn which grew upon the rocky ground, but too soon withered away. A few, a happy few, work on consistently in a sense of duty, they remember the end, and keep it steadily before them. These, and these alone, can be said to know the time of their visitation: to comprehend it, to bear it in mind, to make the proper use of it. It is well with them, it is ill with all the rest.

Thus it was in Jerusalem when our Lord came. Notice, clear enough, had been given in the prophets, that a great change, a visitation from God, was coming on: but very few, a remnant only, regarded. Jerusalem itself, i. e. the great body of the people there, were unbelievers, careless, reckless, insolent, forgetful or unsteady. She had sinned away the time of trial, the accepted time, the day of salvation: and now, behold, the Judge is come, and He passes sentence, and her hour of repentance is over. In His great unutterable love He weeps over the guilty



city, but in His severe and most true judgement He pronounces it too late to save her. The things that belong to her peace are now for ever hid from her eyes. When the Roman army comes and casts a trench about her and closes around her on every side, not even then will she have her eyes opened to know what is coming. How fearful to think, that a great many will be just as much taken by surprise, after just as abundant warning, by the very coming of the Lord at the last great day, and that we, each of us, may be among the number.

But our Lord's saying, "thou knewest not the time of thy visitation," would seem to have a special meaning over and above this. It marks not only the general fault of forgetting or slighting the last great Day, but *this* fault also in particular, that even when our Lord and Master is actually among us, come to visit us in some of His many ways, for correction or for mercy, we know not His time, we are not aware of His Presence, we hide our eyes from Him and will not see that He is with us. In one sense, the whole period of the Gospel, the whole time of His presence in the Christian Church, is a time of His visitation, for He is among us continually, as in other ways, so most especially and most graciously by His Body and Blood in Holy Communion: He Whose delight is to be among the sons of men, Who made Himself our brother by His wonderful Incarnation, and our food by His wonderworking gift in that blessed Supper. Certainly since Christ is always with His Church by His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the whole time of the Church's abode on earth may be truly called a time of her

visitation, and sorrowful indeed it is, that so few should know it, so few think earnestly of it, so few draw near with faith to receive Him so offering Himself.

And then, over and above that blessed and continual Presence, we are all used, and that most rightly, to call it God's visitation to us, when any special change or turn of fortune for good or for evil happens to ourselves or to others for whom we care. Those who have any religion at all in them say on such occasions, 'It is the Lord, He is looking on us, He is drawing near us, it is His power, His hand, His good providence:' and on the contrary, irreligious people allow such occasions to pass without any special thought of God at all: it was a chance, they say in their hearts, which happened to us, or it was such and such a person's fault, and so we let things pass, things even of serious consequence to us, we let them pass, too often, as if there were no God in the world.

And this may be truly said, not only as to the more important events which befall men, public or private, but also concerning the more private and retired visitations of the Almighty to each one of us: concerning which, it would seem, the holy patriarch Job was speaking, in those loving and thankful words, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit<sup>a</sup>." As if he should say, 'Thou hast come in at the needful time to support me when I should have sunk down, to guide me when I should have lost my way, to heal me when I was wounded, to cleanse me when I was

<sup>a</sup> Job x. 12.

deeply blemished and defiled, in silent thoughts, in moments of meditation, in hours of prayer and holy reading, in remarks, or looks, or actions of others that seemed accidental, in little circumstances which to me had meaning such as to others they could not have, in reflections stealing into my mind I knew not how: all these and many more than I can remember have been Thy gracious ways towards me, true and fatherly visitations of Thine, however secret, however silent, however impossible to be put into words, however unknown or slighted by me at the time. In many instances I can now already see their meaning, in all (please God) I hope to see it hereafter. May He give me grace to be very thankful for the past, very much ashamed to have so often failed in discerning Him, very watchful, to do better for the future.'

Further: to make us more earnest in such prayer, we have need to observe one thing more: that among these many and gracious visitations some one must be the last: the last special and earnest trial that God will give us: the last chance on earth of pleasing or affronting Him. Who would not wish to know the time of that last of God's visitations, that he might make timely use of it? To Jerusalem, that Coming of our Lord was indeed a last visitation, the last chance given to the guilty unbelieving city of owning Him and being forgiven. For every one of us, some last chance is prepared: it must be so in the nature of things, but it is seldom that we know it for certain to be the last. Can we help perceiving that the only thing for us to do is to take *each* visitation as the last? There are times, and occa-



sions in which, if we be not more than usually hard-hearted, our merciful God even forces us to feel that He is visiting us, it may be for the very last time. In grievous sickness of course it is so, when our bodies, the perishable earthly homes of our immortal souls, are tumbling as it were to pieces, when disease, decay, perhaps old age, are casting as it were a trench about us, and closing us in on every side, and laying us by degrees even with the ground, and below it, the ground out of which we were taken. When our limbs and senses and bodily powers so fail us one by one, that we are fast coming to the condition of a city in which not one stone is left upon another : then indeed to all but ourselves it is strange and mournful if we know not the time of our visitation : and yet it is very possible and very common : as those who have to wait on death-beds know a great deal too well. If you ask, how and why even dying people, not being direct unbelievers, can be so hardened ; I suppose one very true answer would be, that they have so used themselves to disregard other visitations of Almighty God, that they are got quite into a habit of not seeing His hand in anything. Their way, their hard and incurable way is, not to know the rod, nor Who hath appointed it, even when it is actually smiting them, not to acknowledge nor improve their special blessings when they are most evident to all around them : like Jerusalem when it was said unto her, "There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not." The consequence was, that when Jerusalem's turn came to suffer, not even then did she discern the chastening hand of her God upon her, but went on blaspheming Christ unto the end :

and so those unhappy persons who will not know God's merciful visitations even when they are going on, small chance have they of being the better for the near approach of death; too often they die as they have lived, forgetting or trying to forget Him. E.g. it is surely a very special time of visitation, when God brings a man into near friendship or acquaintance with any good and wise person, perhaps after long years of sin and irreligion: when such a thing happens, one looks on very anxiously, in the thought that if this be trifled with, too probably the poor man will find one day that he has been throwing away his last chance: if he will not in earnest attend to God now, how can we hope that he will have grace to do so when the hour of death is drawing nigh? O depend upon it, my brethren, there is nothing more fearful than a sinner's going on, easy and contented in his mind, while the Lord is visiting him, drawing near him either in judgement or in mercy. O let me beg of you to use yourselves early to take notice of His dealings with you: it is as much as your souls are worth, that you do so. Hear His own account of the end of those who refuse to mind His visitations. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer, they shall seek Me early but they shall not find Me. For that

they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of My counsel : they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices <sup>b</sup>.” Take notice of this, my brethren ; wicked Christians, thoughtless people, who will not regard the Lord coming so near to them, what will their punishment be ? Just to have their own way : that will be curse and judgement enough. God keep us from it, and make us wise in time, that perceiving Him near us now, we may not forfeit His merciful Presence in the hour of death and in the Day of Judgement.

<sup>b</sup> Prov. i. 24—31.



## SERMON XXXIII.

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### THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF OUR LORD.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATT. xxiii. 37.

*“How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”*

WHAT words are these, my brethren, for the great God of heaven and earth! Not so much that He humbled Himself to behold such weak and simple creatures, and to take notice of their doings for our good;—He is our Creator, and wonderful as it is, we know that He must every moment be attending to all the smallest insects and atoms that He has made, else they could not go on in their being. Neither again are we now so much wondering at His caring for the salvation of guilty Jerusalem: we know that He came into the world to save sinners:—but this is our wonder to-day, that He should vouchsafe and condescend to be disappointed: that He, the Almighty, should spend His strength for nought, and in vain. As for us, we know and are told from the beginning that this world is a world of disappointment: we all

know it very well, hard as we commonly find it to make up our minds to the sorrowful truth. "Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain<sup>a</sup>." Riches make themselves wings and fly away. They who put their trust in princes, or in any child of man, will find that there is no help in them. "Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain:" "All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth<sup>b</sup>." "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher: all is vanity<sup>c</sup>." All this we know very well, we are not surprised at all at it: for we know that "man, which is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble<sup>d</sup>." But *this* thing may well surprise us, that the great, everlasting, Almighty God should be subject to disappointment and trouble. Yet so undoubtedly it was. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was pleased, in this as in other respects, to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He hath mercifully set His heart upon one thing, i. e. to save souls: and thousands and millions of souls refuse to be saved. Surely then we ought not to mind our own little disturbances and disappointments so much as we are apt to do, seeing that our Lord Himself is and always has been, in a certain way, disappointed.

It may be, not many of us have ever yet considered how very much of the Book of God is taken up with complaints of this kind. From the book of Deuteronomy to Malachi, Moses and the Prophets, over and over again, mourn in God's Name over the behaviour of the people. "Ye have been rebellious

<sup>a</sup> Ps. xxxix. 7.      <sup>b</sup> Is. xl. 6. 7.      <sup>c</sup> Eccl. i. 2.

<sup>d</sup> Burial Service.

against the Lord, from the day that I knew you<sup>e</sup>.” “I know that, after my death, ye will corrupt yourselves, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye have done evil in the sight of the Lord your God<sup>f</sup>.” So speaks the Lord by Moses: and by the prophet David He says, “My people would not hear My voice, and Israel would not obey Me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lusts: O that My people would have hearkened unto Me: for if Israel had walked in My ways, I should soon have put down their enemies<sup>g</sup>.” And in Isaiah, “What could have been done more unto My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes<sup>h</sup>?” And in another place, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me<sup>i</sup>.” And in Jeremiah: “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me<sup>k</sup>!” And in Malachi: “<sup>1</sup>A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is Mine honour, and if I be a master, where is My fear?” Thus, from beginning to end of the Old Testament, the Almighty had spoken to His people as one disappointed and ill-used: as one who had wrought much and obtained little for his labour. And when He came down and conversed among men in their sight, still all around Him was generally

<sup>e</sup> Deut. ix. 24.<sup>f</sup> Ib. xxxi. 29.<sup>g</sup> Ps. lxxxi. 12—15.<sup>h</sup> Is. v. 4.<sup>i</sup> Ib. i. 2.<sup>k</sup> Jer. ii. 21.<sup>1</sup> Mal. i. 6.



perverseness and obstinacy : still He had like complaints to make. Go with Him to Nazareth, where He was brought up : and where all the neighbours knew at least how holily and justly and unblameably He had passed His youthful days : go with Him there, and see how they receive Him ! Had He not wrought a miracle to deliver Himself, they would have cast Him down headlong. Come near with Him to Jerusalem, now for the last time : sit with Him on the Mount of Olives : observe how earnestly He beholds the city, how He watches, to find, if He may, so much good in her as might save her : as guilty Sodom had the offer of being saved : and mark how the most just Judge, not finding what He looked for, wept over the lost city, as you have heard in the Gospel to-day. The great God, the Almighty Judge, wept. The thought of the miseries that were to come on Jerusalem, and still more the thought of her impenitence, drew tears from the All-seeing Eyes. "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace !" As much as to say, "I wish thou hadst known them : but now they are hid from thine eyes." Again I say, What a thing is this ; that God should say, I wish, and yet it may not be ! What an awful thought for us all : that the Almighty should, as it were, give up His Almightyness, in respect of this one thing ! that He should set before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and say to us, Choose life, and then leave us so far to ourselves ! that He should stand by and not interfere in any miraculous over-powering way, but leave us to make up our own minds. How very fearful ! Yet so it is. He asks His people,

whether they will obey Him or sin: they resolve to sin: He only looks on and weeps. O that we could recollect this, think earnestly upon it, call it really up in our minds, the next time we are ourselves tempted to any known sin! Who will help us then to remember our Saviour, and feel His fatherly Eye fixed upon us, and say to ourselves, I will not sin, for He is looking at me, and why should I grieve Him? What is this pleasure, this gain, this worldly ease and comfort, that it should be worth buying, at the cost of our Lord's tears? Surely this might help us that we fall not in time of temptation.

But I was speaking of instances in which our Lord expressed a deep sense of disappointment: and there is yet one more instance: the latest in His ministry, I mean the spring-evening on which He finally departed from the temple, taking His leave of the place and people in the remarkable words of which the text is part, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" As if He should have said, Do you know how anxious I am, how much I care for your souls? Look at those whom I have created to be mothers, how wholly their minds are wrapt up, as it were, in their offspring. Look at so common a thing as a hen with her young brood: she minds nothing but how to feed and how to defend them: though naturally timid, she is bold as a lion, when she sees a hawk coming: she longs to gather them under her wings, and to feel that there they are safe. Such is Christ's care for Jerusalem:

but Jerusalem cares neither for herself nor for Christ. I would have gathered you : but ye would not. I came down from heaven and was made one of you, that you might be partakers of Me : but as far as doing good to you is concerned, My coming has been in vain.

There are two plain and obvious reflections, which must come, I should think, into every thoughtful person's mind, when he reads or hears of this great miracle of grace, Christ enduring disappointment. The first is, that we ought, once for all, to leave off taking so grievously to heart our own disappointments, especially in worldly matters. We all have our plans and our projects : there is not, I dare say, one person here, either man, woman, or child, who has not *some* sort of wish and vision about something or other, little or great, which he thinks would make him happier than he is. All these plans and desires are, at any time, liable to be utterly ruined, to perish as though they had never been. Are you prepared to have it so, if so it please God ? Perhaps, being a father or a mother, you have your eye upon something, which you think would be greatly for your children's good ; for their sake as you suppose, you are trying to become a little richer, a little higher in place among your neighbours : and perhaps there is no harm in the thing itself : but are you quite sure that you could endure to be disappointed of it ? Could you say from your heart, It is the Lord, He knows what is best ; He loves me better than I do myself ? Alas, we have been often told such things, and the great examples of God's saints have been very often set before us : but as yet we are most



imperfect: well enough pleased, whilst we prosper and have our own way in the world, but sadly disturbed when things go wrong. This is not having the mind of Christ.

But perhaps your care for your children and friends and, as you imagine, for yourself, is a wiser and more Christian care; you are grieved that you cannot succeed better in getting your young people to walk in the way of duty, to serve God and attend to their own souls: or you are disquieted, because you have not some special means of grace so much at your command, as you were used to, and had hoped to go on with. If it is so in earnest, then believe me, good brethren, these are good and happy disappointments: happy, I mean, and good, so far as this, that for you to be disappointed at all in such things is a token that by God's grace you are not far from His kingdom. Only do not so take your failures as to leave off work, or otherwise grow lukewarm: but pray again, pray more earnestly; strive again, strive more humbly; work again, work more diligently, for your friends' good and for your own soul's good: and if all seem more or less in vain, and if the cold chill of disappointment still appear to hang over your path, consider that so it was with your Lord: He was disappointed, more disappointed than any of the sons of men: disappointed in the most glorious and loving work of delivering His sinful brethren, the Jews, and bringing them to His Father: and shall we sinners think much, if we do not presently see the fruit of what little we do for our brethren? He went about doing good, and they called Him a deceiver and a dealer with the devil: we unhappily, as

we go about the world, mingle a great deal of mischief with what little good we do; we ought not surely to think it hard, if we are sometimes misunderstood and called names which we do not perhaps quite deserve; if our well-meant endeavours be marred, and our good, evil spoken of. His own Apostle, who did eat of His bread, and in whom He put special trust, proved a thief and a traitor: let that fearful remembrance help good Christian people in the most sorrowful of all trials, I mean when those who are very dear to them turn out ill, and cast off the fear of God. Christ our Lord, we may be sure, looks down on their grief and tears with special pity and compassion: for He bore the like in the case of Judas, and daily bears it from all hypocritical Christians. Much more ought we to try and bear thankfully those outward and temporal disappointments, which now and then are sure to befall us, even though we may have done as honestly, as wisely and as well as ever we could. At this present time for instance, how many Christian farmers and labourers are more or less troubled about the harvest! How many gardens and fields just now remind us in some measure of the prophet's saying, "Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it, saith the Lord<sup>m</sup>!" What if we tried, each one in his measure, to make the best of such visitations by humbly submitting to them and repenting under them, in remembrance of the Passion of Christ, and of His great disappointment in not reaping a larger spiritual harvest among His own people?

<sup>m</sup> Haggai i. 9.

And take this thought also along with you, my brethren, when you return, as to-morrow, I fear, too many of you will have to return, to crops in some measure damaged and wasted, to fields and gardens visited by God's anger. Do you endeavour not only to learn patience by considering how little fruit at the time seemed to reward your Master's labours; but also to learn very deep and humble penitence. For surely, in this your deep and trying disappointment, you have something to remind you of the bitter disappointment caused by yourselves, before now, to Him Who has counted your souls as it were His own field and garden, and has taken such pains to cultivate the ground of your hearts. If Christ has been for years taking pains with you, and you have been barren and unfruitful, now at length be ashamed, and try to bear some good fruit, now that you are taught by your own disappointment, what a hard and trying thing disappointment is; disappointment, I mean, after honest and charitable labour. Think with yourself; 'I have hitherto, alas, been like that barren fig-tree, on which the owner of the vineyard sought fruit every year in vain. The merciful Husbandman has been digging about me, He has provided most abundantly all that was needful to make me grow and flourish: and what have I done? What fruit have I borne? How am I better than the wildest and coarsest weed?' And when we have got into this train of thought, let us not hastily let it go, but follow it up, and dwell upon it, and pray and labour that it may have good hold on our consciences. Especially, when the merciful Spirit is chiding us inwardly for our great unfruitfulness, let



us in heart try to go over our sins of omission : let us sadly recollect how many and how great things we have left undone, which by all means we ought to have done : every time we missed a prayer, which according to our rules we ought to have said : every time we have wilfully given way to distraction and wandering thoughts in prayer : every charitable deed, that came fairly in our way and was intentionally omitted by us : every instance of care and pains about duty, which we might have practised and did not, is an instance of our having disappointed our Saviour. O let us do so no longer : let us not, if we can help it (and by His grace we surely can help it), be of the number of His enemies, adding weight to His Cross. Let us not, like silly young birds, refuse to be gathered under His wing : but let Him now at last, as it is written, “see of the travail of His Soul, and be satisfied<sup>n</sup>.” Let our Lord (if so it may be) behold in us some good thing, the fruit of His Holy Spirit, and the token of true membership with Him. Let us, from this moment, begin to consider always, how we may so order our lives, as to give least disappointment to our Saviour.

<sup>n</sup> Is. liii. 11.

## SERMON XXXIV.

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### THE TEARS OF OUR LORD.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xix. 41.

*“When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it.”*

WHEN little children see their parents, or any grown up person, in tears, they naturally think a good deal of it, and wonder how it should be. And so do we all, when such as we know to be our superiors in wisdom, courage, and strength of mind, are so *overcome* in our presence. We think presently, how strong the feeling must be, how very serious the occasion, that it should have power so to disturb one who seemed to have such root in Himself, and to whom all looked up so earnestly. As the Jews who were condoling with Mary the sister of Lazarus, when they came in sight of our Lord, and saw how He groaned in Spirit and was troubled, as if the distress was greater than He could well bear to look upon: and when (as it is written) “Jesus wept”—as the Jews (I say) did then cry out, “Behold, how He loved him:” so we naturally judge in this case.

Our Lord's love and care for Jerusalem are to be judged of by the tears which He shed over it. He never wept, that we read of, for His own pains and sufferings, but His love for Lazarus, and His love for Jerusalem, it drew tears from Him. As the Jews wondered at the one, so no doubt did His disciples at the other: and when He spake in words the cause of those most merciful tears, how it wrung His heart to think of what the enemy should do to Jerusalem, "a laying her even with the ground and her children within her;" it should seem as if those whom He specially favoured, Peter, James, John and Andrew<sup>b</sup>, laid it up in their hearts, and came to Him as soon as there was leisure for explanation, pointing out to Him the size of the stones, and the grandeur of the buildings: and then He spake that awful prophecy, wherein He not only warned them how Jerusalem should be destroyed, but He warned also them and us of the end of the world, and the final ruin of the wicked. Doubtless then He was weeping, in the intention of His Divine Soul, not over Jerusalem only, but over all who in any age should reject His gracious offers, and not know the time of their visitation. And what if we, you and I, should be of the number? There is danger of it, great danger. Those tears of our Lord were in one material respect unlike those which He shed at the grave of Lazarus. The weeping for Lazarus was the pouring out of His love and compassion, which He feels as Man for the earthly sufferings of His elect. It was part (if one may say so with reverence), of His Intercession with the Father, concerning which He presently after cried

<sup>a</sup> S. Luke xix. 44.<sup>b</sup> S. Mark viii. 3.



out, “<sup>c</sup> Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.” The tears then of our Blessed Lord at the grave of Lazarus had their fruit: they were part of the ordained means for that great miracle, the resurrection of Lazarus. But the tears shed over Jerusalem what fruit, alas! had they? We dare not say they had no fruit, for as none of our Master’s words return to Him void, so nothing that He did or suffered through the whole of His life in the flesh could be without its end, or could fail to accomplish that end. Must we not apprehend that those mysterious tears of Him Who is both God and Man shed over guilty Jerusalem, did but proclaim her guilt, and seal her sentence in the sight of Angels and men, that the Lord of all the earth might be justified in His saying, and clear when He judged His ungrateful people? As the tears of Christ sprang from unutterable love, so the guilt of slighting them, and the vengeance following, must be unutterable. Therefore to all who believe in Christ Jesus it is no surprise, but just what was to be expected, that “<sup>d</sup> under the whole heaven should not have been done as was done upon Jerusalem” for rejecting her King and Saviour. We do not marvel that the wrath came upon them to the uttermost, “who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost<sup>e</sup>.”

Recollect then, my brethren, what was just now

<sup>c</sup> S. John xi. 41.

<sup>d</sup> Dan. ix. 12.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

pointed out. Those tears shed by Him Who fore-knoweth all things were in effect shed not over Jerusalem only, but over all who in any time should sin as Jerusalem was sinning. Again I ask, What if it should prove that they were shed over you and me?

For we too go to make up a city, Christ's city, the holy city, the city of God, the Church of the living God, that "city set on a hill, that cannot be hid:" whose lights are meant to shine out before men at every distance, even to the ends of the earth; to our Father's glory. We are, each one of us, citizens of that city, and as such our King regards us: as the father or master of a family takes interest in each of His children and servants, as well as in the whole [family]. [We are in His city, both as individuals, and as united in those lesser bodies which taken together make up His whole Church: e.g. in the Church of England in the diocese of Winchester, the parish of Hursley]. We are His city and He is drawing near to us, as He was then drawing near to Jerusalem. On us, men, women, and children, separately, and on all these unions into which we are gathered, one within another, the Eye of our Lord even now rests, as it rested upon Jerusalem with favour and pity, if we are in earnest trying to be dutiful to Him; with terrible displeasure, if we are undutiful and unfaithful: but in either case with a *special peculiar* interest, not as it rests upon the heathen, to whom nevertheless He is nigh at every moment. He is near, unspeakably near, to the heathen, and seeth into their hearts also: but He is nearer to us Christians, for we have the promise,

“He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” He is watching then close at hand over the several Churches which together make up what we call the Church of England. He is near to them and beholds them, to see if they be walking worthily of the many special privileges wherewith He hath graciously blessed them—His Word in their own language, His Sacraments duly administered, the holy Creeds of His ancient Church acknowledged as the rule of our faith. He is watching to see whether with these blessings we of the English Church are, in general, as believing, as reverent, as dutiful, as pure, as much afraid of self-will and self-sufficiency, as our brethren of other Churches, who by God’s providence are permitted to grow up among difficulties which we hardly know of. Again He is watching over this our own parish and congregation, whether in our several stations we are really making the most of the helps He has given us: be they more or be they less, the thing is, to make much of them, yea the very best we can. And thirdly our Lord, not from the Mount of Olives, but from that higher, that everlasting hill to which He ascended from thence, even from heaven our Lord is surveying each *family* in this parish, the ways and the customs of every farm, every cottage, every shop, every household of every rank, all are under His inspection from morning to night, and from year’s end to year’s end. He knows how many go to Church from every house, and how often, and why they stay away who are absent, and how they behave who are here, what prayers are said, what conversation kept up, what company allowed or encouraged, and



most especially He marks what sort of care parents take of the souls of their children, and masters and employers of the souls of those who are under them. Deeply doth He care for us all, and for every one belonging to us, purchased as we are with His Blood, united to Him by His Spirit, bone of His Bone and flesh of His Flesh: and very near is He always to us, "for in Him we live and move and have our being," both our earthly and our spiritual being: and there is no moment in which He is not beholding us: for this is His promise to His earthly temple, and how much more to His spiritual house! "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." And what is very fearful to think of, the moment is fast approaching in which this Presence of our Lord, and this look turned towards us continually, will become visible and outward to us all. We shall see Him even as we are seen, and in this sense, infinitely near as He is at all times, we may truly say that He is every moment drawing nearer and nearer.

Again, then, again and yet again we shall do well to ask ourselves the question, what if we too were in part the cause of those tears which He wept over guilty Jerusalem? He is come very near, He is beholding us very nigh: if He were yet as in the flesh, would He not be weeping over us? We know how it is when persons come from a distance and find how those dear to them are going on. Parents go to a far country for a long time, for work or service: with what anxiety (if they have any love in them) do they return to their children! How do their hearts beat as they draw near the well-known place, lest

some cruel disappointment await them ! How are they cast down, if they find shame or distress at home ! And how very hardhearted, how very unnatural, should we all think any child, who foreseeing this, yet went on in wicked undutiful ways. And yet we go on, without thinking ill of ourselves, in the very ways of Jerusalem whereby she caused our Redeemer to weep. For what was her fault ? He has told us plainly Himself: we cannot mistake Him. It was just this, that even she, even Jerusalem, His own holy and highly favoured city, and that in her own day, knew not the things which belonged unto her peace. Had it been any other place, the wonder and the misery had been less: but for the Lord's chosen place where He had put His Name, to reject Him, *that* was (I speak after the manner of men) a kind of disappointment even to Him, the All-knowing. Again, at any former time the distress would not have been so great, but this was Jerusalem's own day, the day in which the Almighty was giving her her best and last chance: as it is written, "Last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, they will reverence My Son." This I say, was Jerusalem's downfall, and for this Jesus Christ wept over her, that being God's beloved city, and having a special day given her of God, she would not even then know the things which were for her own good. Well, and if there could be tears in heaven, if the Son of God and His Angels and saints could weep, would they not be even now weeping over some of us also, who have the advantages which Jerusalem had, yea, and very much more; and yet how are we better than

<sup>f</sup> S. Matt. xxi. 37.

Jerusalem was? Jerusalem, the choice being fairly given her between a murderer and the Lord Jesus, cried out, "Not this man but Barabbas." How many of us, every day of our lives, choose the wicked world, of which Barabbas was but a sample, to live with, instead of Jesus Christ, not caring for prayers, nor turning our hearts to God, nor refraining from sin for His sake! It seems to be in a manner made certain, that nearly half of those persons in England, who might if they would, attend the public worship of God, are content to go nowhere on Sundays, to be on God's own day as if there were no God in the world. It is very startling, but, alas! from what we see and know, at our own doors, we can but too easily believe it. Might not our Lord then be weeping over England, whose sins He knew beforehand, as well as over Jerusalem, which was in His sight? And what must be the end of her and of so many of her children, without a great and entire change in God's sight? And you who *do* come to Church, is it for you to indulge yourselves with the thought, that the sentence will be for others and not for *you*? That *you* at any rate have no part in the sin? Nay, remember how it was with Jerusalem. She was condemned, not for open irreligion, but for falseness and hypocrisy of heart. Some of the worst sinners in her were the Pharisees, who for a shew made long prayers, with their mouth they shewed much love, but their heart went after their covetousness. And observe, brethren, this sin of hypocrisy is not chargeable on those only who make *long* prayers, (if any such there be among us) and affect, for any reason, to be more devout than others, but all are in



their measure, hypocrites, who make any profession at all of the holy Faith, without trying in earnest to keep all the commandments. There are persons enough and too many in our parishes, who would be angry at being thought irreligious, whose religion consists almost or altogether in being at Church once on Sunday, and there behaving as it may happen: for the rest of the day, and for the rest of the week, they for the most part please themselves, with very little thought of their Saviour. And if they see any one who makes a point of coming twice on a Sunday, of attending, when he can, on other days, or of communicating regularly at the holy Altar of God, presently they are inclined to think and treat him scornfully, and set him down for a sort of hypocrite.

I would say to such an one, Do not deceive yourself: you may be an hypocrite with your short prayers, quite as really so as another might with his long ones. If you are not regularly religious, or wishing and striving to be so, you are an hypocrite, in pretending to be religious at all. I beseech you think better of it: do not go out of the temple, but come to it, and stay in it, for better reasons than now. Gather up your thoughts: consider: here you are in the city and house of the Lord: He is come near, He is beholding you, His searching Eye is upon your heart: and what are *you* about? You are minding anything but Him, every little trifle has power to draw you away from Him, neither in Church nor out of Church are you breaking yourself of your bad habits, for His sake, and by the aid of His Spirit. Surely you know not the time of your visitation: surely you are yet as one of those

over whom the Lord wept, seeing the ruin they were bringing on themselves. Why did He weep? Because He loved them: yes, and because He loveth you, and would not that you should die in your present sin and lukewarmness. How can you endure to go on grieving Him, and trifling with your own soul, while every day something is happening to shew how short the time is, and how little we know when He is coming upon us?

## SERMON XXXV.

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### A LESSON OF CHARITY.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 KINGS xvii. 14.

*“Thus saith the Lord, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the time that the Lord bringeth rain upon the earth.”*

WE know from our Lord's own mouth, and from the mouth of His Angel, that Elijah's character and preaching were so ordered by Divine providence, as to be a type and pattern, so many ages beforehand, of the character and preaching of S. John, our Lord's forerunner. Among many instances of this, which a thoughtful person may observe, we may reckon that which is told of Elijah in the 1st Lesson this afternoon. *That* is the first chapter which tells us any thing about Elijah: and it should seem that the very first lesson which his history teaches is to do works of charity, to the very utmost of our means, in humble faith, relying on God's providence. *That* is the first thing which Elijah's history teaches us: and what was the first thing which S. John Baptist taught the multitudes of the Jewish people, when they flocked round to hear his preaching? It was



the very same lesson. He said, "Repent:" and the people asked him, "What shall we do?" and his reply was, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." As if works of charity had some especial virtue to help men in repentance and in turning to God: and most especially, when persons have outwardly very little to spare.

All of us, alas! have sins to repent of: all of us have great need to turn to God more entirely than we have done: all of us have something to spare for works of mercy, although to many what they can spare seems very little: all of us therefore are nearly concerned in the history of Elijah and the poor widow, which the Church sets before us to-day. The more sins we have to repent of, and the worse off we are outwardly, the more nearly are we concerned in this account of the widow of Sarepta. Let us consider it more particularly.

First of all, there being a famine in the land, and God seeing fit that His servant Elijah should go somewhere to ask for charity, in order to keep him alive, observe where he is sent. He does not go forth at random, and ask bread of the first person whom he meets, but the Lord saith unto him, "<sup>a</sup> Arise, go forth unto Zarephath which belongeth to Zidon, for I have commanded a widow woman to feed thee there." Zarephath, or Sarepta belonged to Zidon: i.e. as our Lord says, speaking of this very history, it was a city of the Gentiles. Elijah is sent for refuge and maintenance not to any of God's own people, but to one of the Gentiles who know not God. Our

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 9.

merciful King in heaven sees afar off, sees deeply into men's hearts, sees where there is the least spark of goodness, the least will in persons to deny themselves for His sake ; He does not overlook such good beginnings, which are indeed His own gracious gift, but in ways of His own, when it seems most unlikely, He manages and contrives to bring them to good effect. He passes over all the rich Israelites, who had known all their lives, out of the law, what a blessing waits on those who consider the poor and needy, and He rather sends His prophet into the land of the Gentiles. Be sure then, though you be ever so ignorant, and outwardly ever so far from God, yet He has His Eye upon you : He is waiting to do you good ; if you look after His messengers, they will come to you : before long, He will invite you to do some kind and charitable act, which will cost you something, or put you out of your way : be sure you do it as thankfully as you can for His sake : for is it not an unspeakable honour and favour, that so many others should be passed over, and you chosen to wait on your Lord in that way ?

But I know what will come into many persons' minds. They will say to themselves, I have little enough, and too little, for myself and those belonging to me : how can I do to help others ? Certainly, to the judgement of man, it does often seem very reasonable to think and speak in this way : yet before we quite satisfy ourselves with it, let us consider well the case of Elijah begging at Sarepta. Here he is, a stranger among the Gentiles, not a single friend near him, no one who knows the least about him : and of all persons in the place, whom is he

sent to by God's providence? To a widow, with one young child. And she is at the last extremity: for when he comes near the place, he spies her gathering sticks, for a fire to bake her last loaf: and after that is eaten, she and her young child have nothing else to do, but only to lie down and die. Who would have thought this a proper person to ask alms of? Or who would have supposed that God would expect her to give any? To us, it might naturally seem an unkind hard-hearted thing, and very foolish, to make such a petition to her. Yet Elijah, guided by the Spirit of God, speaks the word without scruple. First he asks her for a drink of water, which itself might be precious in that place and time, seeing it had not rained on the land at least two years: and as she courteously leaves what she was about, and goes after the water, the prophet becomes yet bolder in his request: "Fetch me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand <sup>b</sup>." He might see how poor she was, even without asking: but she now told him plainly. "As the Lord liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die <sup>c</sup>." She has natural misgivings: how could it be right to rob her own child (besides hurting herself) for this stranger? But Elijah has no scruples: for he is speaking by God's express order; and besides, he has very lately seen how wonderfully God provides for His obedient servants, when all on earth seems to fail them. He is come fresh from the banks of

<sup>b</sup> 1 Kgs. xvii. 11.<sup>c</sup> Ib. 12.



the brook Cherith, where he had for a good while been fed miraculously by dumb creatures. The ravens had brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. He had lacked nothing; because he had carefully observed all that God had commanded him: therefore he had no fear for the poor woman, but an earnest desire that she should do all that he now proposed to her, and should so by self-denial obtain herself a great blessing. Therefore he says to her, "Fear not, but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son<sup>d</sup>." He does not let her go, though he sees she is sorely distressed, but still holds her fast to the appointed trial of her faith. But that it might not prove too hard for her, he tells her something of the great reward prepared for such simple acts of faith and charity. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth<sup>e</sup>." Here was her trial: on the one hand, God's assured promise, spoken expressly by the mouth of His prophet: on the other hand, her child perhaps crying for bread, and only this one morsel to give him. Surely it must have been a hard case: but God Almighty helped and guided her by the secret whispers of His good Spirit, and faith got the better of sight. She went and did according to the word of Elijah: out of that one small handful of meal and that small portion of oil she made a little cake for the prophet first, and afterwards she made one for her child and for her-

<sup>d</sup> Ib. 13.<sup>e</sup> Ib. 14.

self. And behold, when she had made it, she found in the barrel just as much flour, and in the jar just as much oil, as before : and so again the next day and the next, until a great many days, some say a full year, had passed. The prophet, with the widow herself and her child, and whoever else depended upon her, lived for a twelve-month upon that one handful of meal and pitcher of oil : God Almighty multiplying it by His marvellous power, as when He fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and the four thousand with seven loaves. So great was the reward of her faith and charity, in sparing to God's messenger what she seemed to need not for herself only but for her child.

But this was not half her blessing. Bye and bye, to prove her more sharply, and do her yet more good, God sends sickness and death upon her house : touches her in the sorest point, in the thing which she greatly feared. The son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick : and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. She comes to the Prophet, with her dead child in her arms, and mourns before him as one deeply smitten, yet full of penitential anguish. “<sup>f</sup>What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God : art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son ?” That feeling came across her which troubled S. Peter when he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” The prophet's presence was such a token of God's Presence, that the affliction might well seem to her to have come upon them in God's wrath, for not having made

<sup>f</sup> 1 Kgs. xvii. 18.

more of so great a favour, and for not having more entirely repented of her past sins, whatever they were. We are not to understand her as murmuring, but rather that she is receiving the affliction as a call to penitence. And accordingly it is turned for her into a very great blessing. The prophet intercedes for her, he takes her child out of her bosom, he remonstrates and pleads with the Almighty, “<sup>g</sup>O Lord, hast Thou also brought evil upon the woman with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?” He cannot bear to think that his own troubles should have reached as it were to her who had been kind to him, and so he pleads the more earnestly, “<sup>h</sup>O Lord my God, let this child’s soul, I pray Thee come into him again.” At the same time that Elijah says this, he stretches himself upon the body of the child: he communicates life not only by word but by touch, as did our Lord when He raised up Jairus’ daughter: for He not only said, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise, but at the same time He took hold of her hand. And as Jairus’ daughter arose and walked, so this widow’s son, who was actually dead, presently revived to a new life, he sneezed, and opened his eyes, and the prophet gave him to his mother, saying, “See, thy son liveth.” And she for her part was drawn nearer to God than ever. For she said directly to Elijah, “Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true<sup>i</sup>.”

Now, my brethren, there is one lesson at least, which we may all of us easily learn from this poor

<sup>g</sup> 1 Kgs. xvii. 20.

<sup>h</sup> Ib. 21.

<sup>i</sup> Ib. 24.



charitable Gentile widow: and that is, the great approbation with which our Lord graciously regards the alms of the poor, and all works of charity and devotion which put persons out of their way. Perhaps you have thought it hard before now when you were asked or otherwise invited to give something to the propagation of the Gospel, or to the relief of some one more distressed and poorer than yourselves, or to any other expensive work. You have thought with yourselves, There are plenty in the place richer than I: why come to me? Why not ask them only? Again, it may be, some neighbour was sick or in distress, and required your help: and you stood off, though you knew it well: for why? you had a great deal to do nearer home: there were others, you thought, who could manage to give help more conveniently: if indeed some one would pay you, and make it worth while, then you would wait on your neighbour in his poverty, destitution, or sickness: but now you think it out of the question, it is too much to be expected of you: such and such a one can do it much better than you. Of course most men are ashamed to speak in this way: but many I fear, are but little ashamed to think so: and so, too often, the poor are left unvisited, and the sick not properly nursed, and the one neighbour misses the great reward which God offers, would he but give up something of his, for the ease and comfort of the other neighbour. Why should it be so, good brethren and sisters? If we ask, Who shall pay me for sitting up with this poor neighbour, for helping him with his work, for taking care of his children, why do not our own hearts answer at once, what we

know very well out of the Bible. The Lord will pay us for what we do: His rewards are ample and bountiful: He will multiply the one handful of meal, when He sees it cheerfully shared with the poor destitute: He will bless and strengthen the feeble arm, which can hardly do its own work, yet is ready to spend itself for others.

I do not know how it is, but somehow it is certainly true, that among poor persons the *very* poor are often ready to give what little they can spare, or to put themselves out of their way to help their neighbours, when those who are one step higher in the world are unwilling. Perhaps that widow at Sarepta; if instead of only one scanty meal, she had had by her provisions for a few months, might have been less ready than she was to help the poor stranger. She would not be so well able to enter into all his feelings, not having herself yet tasted the anguish of extreme want. At any rate, such is the fact. I know places very poor and forlorn, where people nevertheless are far more willing to wait on their sick neighbours, or otherwise to put themselves out of the way for them, than they commonly seem in another place, not so poor. They do not make all manner of difficulties, wanting to know how they are to be paid, or who is to look after their own little matters, during the time that they are in their neighbour's sick room. In that way, I fear, too many of us lose a great blessing. Now why is this? Surely for want of faith. We do not seriously and really believe that Christ Himself is in our distressed brother; that in helping our brother we help Christ. Else surely, instead of putting it

off upon others, we should press eagerly for our part of the trouble. We should count it a disappointment if any one was before hand with us, we should watch for the next opportunity, and thankfully lay hold of it. Depend on it, you will be no loser in the end, no not even in this world, by what you truly and really give to Christ. His prophet never saw "the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread." His Son has promised, "Seek ye first My Kingdom and My righteousness, and such things as food and raiment shall be added unto you."

And there is another great encouragement, of which this history may well put us all in mind. If any be wanting in knowledge and necessary instruction, let him for Christ's sake take pains to wait on others, though it be to his own hindrance, and Christ will make his little knowledge go a very great way. In itself it may be but a handful or a drop, but faith and charity will multiply it exceedingly, and you shall live many days on it, even all the days of this life, and the long days of eternity afterwards. We have heard and read of persons who had but one book to read, or remember, nay sometimes but one page, one sentence, from some good book: and God's grace made it enough for them. And you, perhaps, are poor and ignorant: but do not let your poverty hinder your charity, and God will not let your ignorance hinder your salvation.



## SERMON XXXVI.

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### ZEAL FOR GOD.

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 KINGS xix. 10.

*“I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.”*

WHERE love is, true love, there must always of course be zeal : or as Holy Scripture calls it, Jealousy. If a child loves his father, he will of course be jealous for his father's honour : a thing which our Blessed Lord teaches day by day in a way not to be mistaken, in that He commands us, whenever we pray to put up this as our first petition, that our Father's Name may be hallowed i. e. honoured and respected. We are to ask this before we ask any thing either for our brethren or for ourselves. A dutiful son will never endure to hear his parent disrespectfully spoken of, nor a loving husband or father to have his wife or child insulted : in like manner, if you are at all dutiful to your God and Saviour, you will be jealous for Him and His honour : it will be a real trouble and disgust, and in some sort a provocation, when improper liberties are taken with God's Name, or with any person or thing that belongs

to Him. When you hear an oath, or any corrupt and bad word, when you see wilful and daring ill-behaviour in Church, when people say Who is the Lord? and go on scornfully breaking His great commandments, it will not only be a grief and a fear to you for them and for yourself, but it will also be a trouble to you, and hard to bear, in that it is an affront to your God. It will be touching you in a tender place, in the apple of your eye: which feeling caused the holy Psalmist to cry out, "Do not I hate them, O Lord that hate Thee." Not that he literally hated their persons, but he could not endure their doings: and while he pitied and prayed for them, "Make their faces ashamed, O Lord, that they may seek Thy Name," he nevertheless heartily disliked their company, and wished them, being such as they were, out of his sight.

The prophet Elijah, of whom at this time the Church tells us so much, was full of zeal, full of godly jealousy, because he was full of love and faith, and lived in the times of exceeding corruption and decay. He loved God so well, that for His sake, he willingly defied all the power and malice of the wicked kings of Israel; and from time to time he longed like S. Paul to depart, and to be with his God; "which is far better;" but the same love, with a strong faith, helped him to endure, and to trust himself undoubtingly wheresoever the Lord willed him to be. God told him in the time of famine to go to a brook-side, and the ravens would come and feed him: and he made no question: he went and was fed, and those birds nourished him for half a year. Then the Lord sent him to a woman who had but a little oil in a

cruse and a handful of meal in a barrel, and told him *that* was to be his sustenance: and again he made no question, he went and was fed. And what perhaps was still more trying, he did not shrink back from using a holy severity, when the Spirit of God told him. He was not afraid to insist on the poor widow's feeding *him* first from her little store, nor afterwards to put the whole multitude of the prophets of Baal to death; nor on an after occasion to call down fire from heaven, and consume the soldiers of the wicked king.

This was Elijah's love and faith, causing him at once to do whatsoever he knew to be his Lord's will: and according to his faith and love, so was his zeal and godly jealousy. The more plainly he had before his mind's eye the great and awful things out of sight, the more provoking and distressing was it to him to see how the king and people went on: as if there were no God in heaven, no commandments to keep, no wrath hereafter to be feared. The more he loved the God of Israel, the greater his indignation and distress to see Baal worshipped instead of God. The times were exceedingly trying in that way: and he was raised up on purpose to deal with them according to God's will. There was the wicked Ahab, of whom it is written, "There was none like unto Ahab who sold himself to do evil." There was that same unholy Jezebel, whose name has been made by the Holy Spirit a very proverb in the Christian Church, for impure idolatry and corruption of all belonging to her. There were the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove, eight hundred and fifty men, whose religion was to worship evil spirits, and



their maintenance to eat at wicked Jezebel's table. And worst of all, there was the weak unprincipled people, used from their childhood to assist at the idol feasts, sitting down there to eat and to drink, and rising up to dissolute and wicked play: and if they were moved for a moment by that awful miracle on Mount Carmel, when the fire came down on Elijah's sacrifice, to cry out, "The Lord, He is the God;" and to assist in the slaying the false prophets; yet the very next day they were ready to obey the wicked Jezebel, seeking after Elijah to take his life. Well might this make him very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. The feeling was as a burning fire shut up in his bones, as another prophet afterwards expressed it: he was weary with forbearing, and he could not stay. It was this feeling that wrought in him, far more than fear for his life, or mere ordinary disappointment, during that wonderful journey which is related in this evening's lesson. Consider him first, my brethren, at the end of the first day's journey: how he found a juniper tree somewhere in the waste wilderness, and lay down under it, and requested for himself that he might die. "It is enough," said he, "now, O Lord, take away my life for I am not better than my fathers." His feeling seems to have been like that of Moses, when he, wearied out with the frowardness of the people, said unto the Lord, "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness." And God dealt with Elijah somewhat in the same way as He had dealt with Moses. He made each of them see by a miracle, that His Hand was not waxed short. Moses was made to see this, by the abundance of quails which came suddenly all

around the camp, for meat for the people when they murmured: Elijah, by the cake and cruse of water, which the Angel provided for him when he waked out of his sleep under the juniper tree; which had virtue to suffice him for forty days until he came unto Horeb, the Mount of God. He came says the Scripture to the cave, and lodged there: and it is supposed by some that it was the very same cave in which so many years before Moses had been permitted to see as much of God's glory as might be seen by man. There God caused Elijah twice to make profession of his zeal: and this time it seems not to have been an Angel, but the very Word of the Lord Which came unto him: first in the cave where he was lodging, as it were quietly in a dream, afterwards on the open mountain, with a mighty strong wind, an earthquake and a fire: these however went only *before* the Lord; He was not in any of them: but He was in the still small voice that followed them, and Elijah knew His Voice, and came out wrapping his face in his mantle, as Moses did, fearing to look upon God. Both times the Lord asked him the same question, "What doest thou here Elijah?" and both times he made the same answer, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts;" but it is likely that the second time he spoke more calmly than the first, and that his bitter weary feeling had begun to be relieved: for what was that still small voice which he heard but God's own token of the blessed Gospel itself, coming after the terrors of the law, and proclaiming that kingdom of God which cometh not with observation, for behold it is within us, it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy

Ghost? His mind being thus quieted as by more than heavenly music, he receives God's answer to his zealous complainings: and what is the substance of that answer? That he is not to give up, nor despair of his work, because for the present he seems to be failing; he is not alone, though he seems to be alone: God has still left him seven thousand in Israel, His counsels are still to stand and His work to go on, by those whom Elijah shall anoint, even as Moses had been directed to choose out seventy elders, who should partake of the Spirit that was upon him, and go on with his work when he should be no more. Thus was Elijah the great and holy prophet comforted in his sad disappointment, and encouraged in his holy and loving zeal by the great God Himself Whom he loved, and Who put it in his heart to love Him. And the comfort and encouragement lay in these two things: 1, in being permitted still to go on, and work, and continually to be doing something for God, and 2. in knowing that there are others, few perhaps out of many, unknown and despised in this world, yet still there are some, to sympathize with him, and work on in secret towards the same good end, by the same quiet, simple, patient ways.

And surely, my brethren, these lessons of the Almighty to His great and highly favoured prophet, must come seasonably to many of us. For in every place there are many, who are troubled, or think themselves troubled, at the sad wickedness of irreligion, which they see around them. And if they do not, like Elijah, take it to heart so sadly, as to pray God to take away their lives, yet is it a real and dangerous



temptation in many ways: chiefly and alas! far too commonly, in that each one seeing others going wrong, and finding how hard it is to mend them, comes to imagine that it is all a matter of course, that it has always been so, and always will be so, and the next thing is to allow the thought, that the evil cannot be so very bad as we thought it: and so men become first lukewarm, then positively sinful: their seeming love of God and zeal for His glory depart altogether, and the wicked one has his own way with them. Oh my brethren, beware of this! with all your hearts pray to your Saviour that you may never be tempted to think little of any sin because you find it so very common.

But where things are not so bad as this, where there is real love and zeal for God, where men are really shocked and frightened at sin, there is still often great cause for warning men as Elijah was warned, how to turn their indignation and grief to good account. Sometimes one or another in a family becomes aware by God's providential teaching, by reading of Holy Scripture or by attending to the instructions of the Church, and comparing them with what he sees at home or in the general behaviour of those nearest him, that things are going on very badly, that God's anger is being kindled against that house: and he tries to do what little he can towards amendment; and God permits him to make mistakes and to fail. Sometimes a person is put actually in charge of others, as head of a family, as an influential person in a neighbourhood, sometimes he is only called to look on as it were; as we all of us, more or less come to know and to form

some judgement as to the way in which things are going on in our own neighbourhood, our own country, or even the whole generation in which our lot is cast on this earth. In any of these cases, when we cannot help seeing that the wickedness of man is great in the earth, God dishonoured everywhere and immortal souls corrupted and endangered, and feel grieved and indignant at it, we are in some slight degree tried as Elijah was. How may we, by the mercy of our Lord and the help of His good Spirit, make the best of that trial? Before all things we must look at home. Consider whether at the very time that thou art burning with indignation against this or that grievous transgressor, there may not be one of God's holy angels waiting at hand, ready to reprove thee as David was reproved by Nathan, "a<sup>a</sup>Thou art the man." Thou hearest perhaps of some unfortunate person, who like the woman mentioned in the Proverbs, giving ear to pretences of love which in reality is deadly hate, has forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God; and it moves thy spirit to exclaim against her; and it is right thou shouldst be shocked, for the sin and affront to God is very great: but take heed to thyself, watch thine heart, lest thou also in thought at least, shouldst be guilty in the same way: beware of trusting thine own heart, and thinking that all is right, because thou art shocked, sincerely shocked, at others' misdoings. Often and often, in punishment of such presumption, persons have been permitted to fall miserably into the same sins which they were most shocked at in others. Therefore watch

<sup>a</sup> 2 Samuel xii. 7.

thyself especially, when thou seemest to thyself especially jealous of God's honour, and full of zeal against sin or unbelief, at such times watch thyself and *pray*. Prayer was a great help towards the perfection of the holy Elijah : as S. James writes of him : "Elias was a man, subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly" and God heard him, and very great fruit came of it. Do thou in like manner, when the wickedness around seems all too strong for thee, pray against it, pray for the guilty, pray for such as are likely to be tempted, pray for thyself and for those near and dear to thee, that they may be kept altogether from it. This will be an admirable use to put thy natural indignation to, if it make thee, as it did Samuel and all other true lovers of God and goodness, more and more fervent and regular in prayer.

Thirdly, as Elijah was sent back, without any direct reply to his bitter complaint, to do God's errand to divers persons, and trust Him for the result: so when the spirits of Christians have been stirred to vehement anger and distress at the sight of sin, let them understand it as a token from Him, Whose they are and Whom they serve, "whatsoever their hand findeth to do" for Him, that He would have them do it at once, and "with their might;" that is to say, as well as ever they can. It is a true and healthy zeal for God which expends itself not in complaining but working. For what should you think if a house was on fire, and some one professing to be very much attached to the owners of it, were to spend all his time and his breath in pointing out how the fire began from this or that person's carelessness; without lending a helping hand, without any endeavour



to preserve either person or property? Would it not be plain to you that such a man had no real love nor care in his heart for the family? Just so, must we fear concerning ourselves, when we catch ourselves in thinking sharply of others, without increased care in accusing and condemning our own faults.

Lastly, in all thy judgements concerning thy sinful brethren, and in all thy dealings both with them and with thy sinful self, remember the "still small voice:" do all things gently, humbly, patiently: by prayer and self-denial obtain from thy Saviour grace to love thy brother in earnest, and having obtained it, be not ashamed of it; be not ashamed, nor afraid, to let it be known to unhappy sinners that thou wishest to love them and do them good, if they will let thee.

But if unhappily there be any here who have never yet felt in the least degree as Elijah did; who have in such sense taken every thing easily, that the sin of their neighbours has been to them no trouble, because they have never yet been deeply alarmed and anxious about their own sin: how are they to think of themselves? What will they do when the Lord shall visit them? Their fellow sinners cannot help them, the mountains and the rocks cannot help them. O let them, before it be too late, fly to Him, Who redeemed them so dearly to Himself, and obtain of Him, by prayer and penitence, grace to love Him. And as soon as ever they begin to love Him, they will be indignant indeed at the general corruption, but much more, each one at his own. And their zeal, like that of holy Phinehas, shall then be counted unto them for righteousness.

## SERMON XXXVII.

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### WARNINGS AFTER CRIME.

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Kgs. xxi. 20.

*“And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.”*

HERE we see God's providential care even of such a person as Ahab, so utterly given up to all manner of wickedness. It is a very fearful picture, yet full of mercy and encouragement to true repentance. Consider who the persons are, when, and in what circumstances they are met. Represent to yourselves the vineyard of Naboth, hard by Ahab's palace. By false accusation, most likely that very morning, Naboth had been slain, and his vineyard forfeited to the king: and although Ahab himself was not present at the unjust sentence, yet he had his full portion of the guilt of it: for when his wife, Jezebel, the wicked contriver of it, told him that it was done, and the vineyard was now at his disposal, he rose up, and went down from his palace into the

neighbouring vineyard, no doubt intending to enjoy himself with the sight of what he had so long coveted, and thinking now to enjoy it in peace, and have his own way with it the rest of his days.

These were his wicked and ignorant thoughts, as he was on his way into the vineyard; but when he came there, he found one whom he little expected to see. The word of the Lord had come to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, which is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he has gone down to possess it." Elijah, who had so often before reproved Ahab, and had not suffered him to be at peace in his sins, shews himself now also suddenly, with that fearful message, "Thus saith the Lord, hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" And again, "Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Ahab's answer was that in the text; "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" He accounted Elijah his enemy, because he told him the truth: just as some while before, when the prophet had shewn himself to him, at a time when the whole land was in trouble from the long drought, the king's salutation was, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Although Elijah was, in fact, coming to shew him how he might prevail with God to send rain upon the land.

But so it is usually with men inveterate in wickedness. They want to be left quiet in their sins, and when they are reprovèd, they call it troublesome; and when the Church lifts up her voice and rebukes



them, as her duty is, for wickednesses which have grown bold and common among them, this is to them "troubling of Israel," "turning the world upside down;" or they take it as a personal affront, as an ill-natured, insolent thing; not knowing that all the while it is God of Whom they are indeed complaining, and of Whom they speak such hard words; still less considering that this is His way, to preserve them from utter ruin; that if He were to leave off troubling, if He were no longer to shew Himself the enemy of their sins, their real enemy would never loose his hold of them for ever.

Such is the scene which the Church sets before us to-day, the awful prophet and the wicked king meeting one another in the vineyard of Naboth, and such the conversation which passed between them. Had we been present, seeing and hearing them, doubtless we should have gone away in deep thought, both on God's ways in warning Ahab, and on his manner of receiving the warning. Let us seriously endeavour to have the same thoughts now. For though we see them not with our bodily eyes, yet their true history in Holy Scripture has made them in a manner present to us: we have been looking in at that vineyard of Jezreel, and have heard the words which were there spoken, and we know well Who is always watching, to see how we deal with those records of His doings of old; whether we go away and forget them, or think of them as mere curious histories, or whether we apply them in earnest to our own consciences.

First, then, we seem to observe, in God's dealings here with Ahab, a great law of His universal provi-

dence ; not usually to leave sinners at ease in their sins. The very heathens and unbelievers have observed it in all times ; from the very spring of their earthly and wicked delights there ooze out drops of bitterness, paining and vexing them in the midst of their highest enjoyments. Now this is His great and unspeakable mercy, to those who least seem to deserve it. Left to themselves, they must surely perish ; but He does not leave them to themselves.

Recollect the history of the very first wilful sin. Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of Paradise. The Lord came down, and made His presence known in the garden ; they knew He was there, and in their shame tried to hide themselves. Had He permitted them so to do, had He passed by, and not called unto Adam, what would have become of them and of us ?

The people before the Flood were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,” and so they went on to the end ; yet God left them not quite at their ease : Noah was for a long while preparing his Ark in their sight, and more or less disturbing them with notions of the wrath to come.

The people of Sodom, in like manner, were first reprov'd by the presence of Lot, then by two Angels coming expressly to warn them by miracle, before they destroyed the place. Moses in Egypt over and over, almost after each new plague, told Pharaoh what the next plague would be. The night that Babylon was to be overthrown, the king, Belshazzar, in the midst of his idolatrous feasting and blasphemy, saw a hand come out, and write on the wall those

words of threatening, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." And, in after years, the wicked king Herod could have little or no rest in his profane adulterous way of life, because the holy Baptist was still admonishing him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

In short, this was ever the way of God, especially with His own people, sinning again and again. "a I sent unto you all My servants the prophets, rising early, and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" Wherever you hear of a wicked Ahab, you hear of a fearless, self-denying Elijah to warn him. If even holy David forget himself, and continue awhile in grievous sin, presently Nathan shall come to him, tell him the case of a like grievous sinner, and say to him, "Thou art the man."

Or, if there be no prophet to speak, God's providence will not be silent. Trouble and affliction will do their work; and the man, as he is awake or wanders alone, will be made to bethink himself, "Our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have turned away good things from us."

Thus we read in the book of God; and do not men so find it in their daily experience? To begin with things small in comparison; let any one of us look back, and try to remember his childish days; let us recal, as well as we can (and many of us, I suppose, can do it but too exactly), the miserable particulars of our first grievous sin in any way: I question not but we shall remember more or fewer hardnensses and discomforts, which we can see now

<sup>a</sup> Jer. xlv. 4.



to have been purposely thrown in our way by God's good providence, to prevent us, had we not been obstinate, from going on to harm ourselves wilfully and mortally.

Bye and bye, as men grow older, and deadly sins come on them nearer, and in more fearful sort, the warnings of God's providence are multiplied accordingly, and brought more and more home to us. How many difficulties commonly occur in men's schemes of deliberate, shameful sin ! There are appearances to be observed, the eyes of men to be avoided, persons who might interfere and hinder, to be put out of the way ; troubles and expenses and dangers without number must often be incurred beforehand, and when the time comes, some unforeseen event destroys at once all the project, and if they are to win their bad end, they must begin their work over again.

Holy Job speaks of this in certain kinds of wickedness especially ; " The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the day time is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me, and he disguiseth his face. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day time ; they know not the light. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death : if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death."

In all such cases, every hardship, every peril, doubt, and agony, which the wicked person has to go through, must be taken as a sign of God's immediate presence ; it is like the Angel of the Lord standing in the way before Balaam, with his sword

drawn in his hand ; whom Balaam could not see, till his eyes were opened by miracle ; neither could he believe in him, because his heart was going after his covetousness : it seemed to him but the stubbornness of the ass he rode on, yet was it not the less true, that the Angel really was there : and so when Christians are setting about any evil work, and wilfully deceiving and blinding their own hearts, and difficulties and hindrances arise, they need not doubt that it is really God and His angels, coming out to withstand them, because of their perverse ways.

Neither need we doubt what His meaning is in so doing. He wills them to repent ; He would not have them die. The untoward accidents, the unexpected turns, the strange and sudden failures which happen to them, are so many checks from His Fatherly hand, so many calls to a better mind, so many stays in the steep and broad way to hell.

But suppose them, like Ahab, to have succeeded in their evil purpose : imagine them to have "killed, and also taken possession," yet their merciful Corrector forsakes them not. He sends an Elijah to meet them where they least expected : the object for which they had sinned, and, it may be, suffered, when they have won it, proves poor and worthless, if not utterly disgusting to them. Their conscience begins to torment and reproach them ; and what is conscience, but the direct voice of God ? They try, perhaps, to stifle this, by sinning on with a higher hand ; as a dishonest person, or one who is unkind to his family, may take to drinking, in order to escape his own thoughts : but here God's merciful providence meets them with something which mars all

their false pleasures; some one circumstance which they cannot get over: as Mordecai, sitting in the king's gate, and refusing to honour Haman, took away all the pleasure he had in his pride, and ambition, and worldly greatness; or they are full of inward misgivings and forebodings: terrors of God or man, they know not what or why, seem to "set themselves in array against them."

Or, it may be, fearful judgements come upon them, sickness, loss of friends, poverty, disappointment, dishonour; and those judgements not seldom so ordered, that there is no mistaking the crime for which they were sent: as when the Jews, who crucified Christ, were in great numbers crucified themselves round Jerusalem by the Roman emperor: or when the Egyptians, who had murdered the young children of the Israelites, had their first-born smitten by an Angel: or as in this very case of Ahab, that in the same plot of ground which had tempted Ahab and Jezebel to so grievous sin, the blood of them both should be shed, I mean both of Jezebel and of Ahab's son, and their bodies cast out to the dogs.

By all these, and many more sorts of warnings, the Almighty and merciful Judge has dealt in all ages even with grievous sinners; much more with those who, in the main, have been striving to please Him; by such warnings He deals with us: our experience, open and secret, is full of them, if we will but consider: and who can say, how much depends on our manner of receiving them?

Some there have been, among sinners, who have taken the chastenings and alarms of the Most High in a kind of sullen affronted way, as Cain, when the



token being given of the Lord's preferring Abel, he was "very wroth, and his countenance fell." Some have noticed it scoffingly, as the Sodomites, when Lot reasoned with them; "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." Some have been angry and tyrannical, and have openly challenged God's messengers, as Pharaoh to Moses; "Get thee hence, let me see thy face no more; for in the day that thou seest my face, thou shalt die."

Again, we have known often of ways of receiving God's warnings, more quiet and outwardly respectful, but not in the end much more profitable than those. Here in the text Ahab does not threaten Elijah. He only speaks to him in a complaining sort of tone, as if he, the king, was himself suffering a hardship: he cries out like one greatly aggrieved, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" But what does it all come to? When he hears of the dreadful judgement hanging over him, he rends his clothes, puts sack-cloth on his loins, and goes softly, that is, humbly and timidly like a very penitent person. And even this small outward beginning is so far pleasing to Almighty God, that, in consideration of it, He promises to bring the utter destruction of his house not in his own, Ahab's days, but in his son's days. Who knows how much greater mercy might have been shewn him, had his repentance continued and grown deeper?

Belshazzar, that king of Babylon to whom the fearful hand-writing came, seems to have been simply frightened by it: he sent for Daniel, listened to his alarming explanation, and gave him the reward promised. But we read nothing of Belshazzar's repenting; and he was slain that very night.

As for Herod, when he was so often reproved by the Baptist, there must have been for a while better hopes of him. For he did many things upon hearing S. John: he sent for him and communed with him often: S. Mark's word is, "he heard him gladly." But, alas! what signified such hearing as that of Herod, which left him just where he was, in his sin, not so much as meaning or attempting to break off his unlawful marriage?

May God of His great mercy deliver us from that, and from all these evil and unworthy ways of receiving His blessed and merciful warnings: and grant us rather to lie down with David, humbling ourselves in the very dust, when His servants the prophets come to us, and speak against sin, and our conscience tells us, 'Ye are the men!'

May He grant us to weep bitterly with S. Peter, at the Lord's turning to look upon us!

He does turn to look upon us, whensoever and wheresoever His providence, secret and open, checks us for our sins. He finds us, as Elijah found Ahab, not as an enemy, though his first sternness may well alarm such as we are, but as our true and only sufficient Friend.

Is any man sick? Let him lose no time, but at once begin considering with himself, for what cause this sickness is sent upon him: what evil purposes or corrupt practices he had been harbouring, which by such a gracious visitation the Lord would stay and cure within him.

Is any bereaved of dear friends? Let the bitterness call his sin to remembrance, that he may begin to live so as not to be separated for ever from them.

Has any lost his substance, or any proportion of it? Let him repent of the covetousness or greediness, the luxury or extravagance, which his money before had tempted him into.

Is any troubled with sad and distressing doubts, not knowing with whom and where to worship? what he must do to have his sins forgiven? Repentance is his only remedy, Christ his only safeguard; let him truly repent and come to Christ, by coming to those among His appointed Pastors, to whose care God's providence seems most clearly to commend him.

Let him not with Ahab count Elijah his enemy; but let him be so far the enemy of his own corrupt flesh, as to do what Elijah bids him, to punish his old sins, and tame his wilful nature.

He Who was so gracious to Ahab's brief outward repentance, He will surely accept and cherish you, truly humbling yourselves before Him.



## SERMON XXXVIII.

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CATHOLIC FAITH WITHOUT RESPECT OF PERSONS.

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 COR. XV. 11.

*“Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach,  
and so ye believed.”*

THERE is something very remarkable in the tone of this verse, especially as it comes in only by the way, and occasionally: so we should speak of it, if we read it in merely human writings: we should say that it dropped as it were from the Apostle while he was thinking of something else.

Now such are the very expressions, which disclose most entirely, both in writing and in conversation, the true, habitual mind of the speaker: the constant flow of his thoughts and feelings: and when we meet with them in the writings of an inspired Apostle, no doubt they set before us, with even more clearness and certainty, the Mind of the Spirit, whereof he was full.

They seem, as was said, to drop by chance from the speaker. But faith, which knows that nothing can come by chance, more especially in the holy and

Divine Scriptures, that every jot and tittle has its meaning: faith looks well to every such saying, lest something be there contained which God would have known, but which there is danger of our forgetting, or missing altogether. Just as those who are in company with one whom they deservedly hold in veneration, watch what seems to fall from him by chance, knowing that of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and delighting to find out how much more his words mean than he himself was aware of when he spoke them.

Such a saying is this of S. Paul's: you have been taught so and so, by me and by others: but "whether it were I or they, so we speak, and so ye believed." It seems to be merely a way of passing from one part of his argument or statement to another: but consider it attentively, and you will find that it involves two great truths, intimately connected with sound belief and true reverence.

First, "whether it were I or they," it makes very little matter. The person of the teacher is comparatively a thing of small consequence.

Secondly, there was in the things taught, when he wrote, absolute unity. "So we teach, and so ye believed." Their teaching was all Catholic instruction, the faith of their hearers was all Catholic Faith.

On the one hand, personal differences between one teacher and another are to an eye like that of the Apostle, insignificant: on the other hand, unity of Faith and teaching is all in all. Let us endeavour to reflect steadily on each of these sentiments, so contrary to the way of the world.

For the world has for many years, if not always, been inclined to say, If he is a good and a wise man, what signifies his doctrine? And again, it holds that God has so made us, that agreement in doctrine, unity of Faith, is impossible; and of course, men add, He meant us to understand, that diversities in such matters are not displeasing to Him.

Now with regard to the first, the personal authority of the teacher, it will be understood at once that S. Paul, in speaking lightly of it, did not mean to undervalue all kinds of authority, but only that which men choose out for themselves to be guided by. The Almighty Father and Teacher of us all has so framed us, that we cannot, if we would, without doing violence to our very inmost feelings, we *cannot* be altogether unmindful of the persons of our teachers, in judging of what they teach. On the contrary, the very principle, the first step in all learning, must be implicit confidence in the teacher. We trust him, not because he is wise and good, but because he is our parent, or in the place of a parent, and because we cannot help trusting him. We do it, of course, without asking why or wherefore: *that* would be as unnatural, as for a hungry child to refuse food, until his parent had explained to him how that particular food was good and wholesome. As children, we believe our parents and teachers, those under whom God's providence has set us without any choice of our own, because of an instinctive feeling, whereof we are hardly if at all conscious ourselves, but which says not the less certainly to the very bottom of our hearts, that their teaching is the teaching of the Almighty, they are the tokens of His Presence, the



organs of His voice : in believing them, we believe Him. From such impressions all knowledge of course must begin : namely, from the Eternal Light shining upon us through His appointed organs : and in this sense our trust may be called personal, and the question, 'Who taught you this or that ?' may just make all the difference : as indeed it is often asked of children, when they affirm any thing which the hearer thinks strange and unaccountable : and if the answer prove that they had it from their parents, it is no longer thought strange and unaccountable *in them*.

Depend upon it, the holy Apostle was far from slighting such respect of persons as this ; but what he *does* speak lightly of is, our choosing for ourselves, without any such call from above, whose persons we will respect, so as to believe what they teach because they teach it. He would fain check that restless and arrogant spirit, which he had so often before complained of in those to whom he was writing : the spirit which set them upon making comparisons of gifts and graces between one another, and of saying, I am of Paul, or of Apollos or of Cephas ; or even (so he goes on) of Christ Himself. By which it appears, that our Lord's own name may be used schismatically and arrogantly ; and we may presume that it is so, when people take it to themselves, or their friends, in such a way as to exclude others by their own private judgement.

This is the sort of personal deference on which S. Paul has set an evil mark : not at all on that which is but an acknowledgment of parental or otherwise providential authority. If we consider it, we shall

find that the two are opposed to each other, and that the Apostle, in warning men against the one, was in fact earnestly urging them to abide by the other. For when men, carried away by private regard or admiration of this or that person's eloquence, or skill, or engaging and attractive way, choose him to have authority over their minds, and receive what he says because he says it: what is this, but transferring to another those rights over themselves, which Almighty God, has already vested in their parents, or in those whom He has caused to be to them as parents? It is mere wilfulness, caprice, and presumption, with contempt of just authority, on their part, and they cannot reasonably expect that God should give a blessing, or His truth make itself appear, to such pleasers of themselves.

All men see this at once, in certain matters relating to this world, of which parents are allowed to be the only proper judges for their children, so long as they continue children. But how is it in the things of the other world? What parent have we there, to shew us the mind of Christ as to our faith and conduct, with as much practical certainty as our earthly parents guided us aright about things needful in this world?

If we will believe the Apostles' Creed, and will steadily take it for our guide to the meaning of the Scriptures, not suffering ourselves to be unduly embarrassed by the difficulties which Christian men's sins have caused in these latter times, we shall see there, in the Apostles' Creed, I say, we shall see, an answer to the question, whose guidance we are to take. To this end, no doubt, mention has ever been

made of the Holy Catholic Church in all Christian Creeds, all professions of Faith appointed to be made in Baptism; that Christians might know who is their Guide on earth, what the channel of grace and instruction from the most sacred Father, Son and Spirit, in Whom the earlier part of the Creed had taught them to believe.

If we reflect on it a little, we shall easily perceive that the Holy Catholic Church, in which we believe, must mean something more than merely a company of persons believing as they ought to do: all the other articles of the Faith set before us so many mysteries, some great secret of God's power and goodness; and doubtless this about the Church does the same. It tells us that God will have always on earth a kingdom of persons sacramentally united to His Son, made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; that He abides in this kingdom after a particular manner, to teach it, and guide it into all truth.

The kingdom then of Almighty God, His Church on earth, is our Guide on earth. She is our mother; in her arms we were brought to Christ; through her have been derived down to us all those heavenly and saving graces, whereby it pleases Him, in the holy Sacraments, first to make men His, and afterwards to build them up in Him.

The Church, therefore, has a mother's authority to direct us: we are not to look to particular teachers, but to *her*. All those exercises of implicit, unswerving faith, in which the Almighty has brought us up from our very cradles, our reliance on parents, nurses, teachers, governors, were intended to pre-



pare us for the one great exercise of all, that by which, renouncing our own partialities and judgments, we give ourselves over to the teaching of the Almighty, in that portion of His kingdom wherein He has cast our lot.

And this will not, cannot guide us materially wrong, so long as we carefully endeavour withal to fear God and keep His commandments. For to the Church all the promises are made. He will be with her always, even to the end of the world. "His Spirit that is upon her, and His law that He hath put into her mouth, shall not depart from her, nor from the mouth of her seed, nor from the mouth of her seed's seed, from henceforth even for ever."

Accordingly, as the first words of the text shew how S. Paul would *not* have us interpret Scripture, and receive holy lessons, that is, not out of personal deference or regard to this teacher or that, so the concluding words conduct us to that authority on which it is safe to depend. "So we preach, and so ye believed." It is the same sentiment which occurs so perpetually both in his writings and in those of S. John. "Hold the traditions, or instructions, which ye have received, whether by word or our epistle. Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." So also the beloved disciple: "The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father."

All these sayings are in other words the same thought with that in the text: away with that arrogant respect of persons which sets up private judgement, the authority of man, in place of Christ's authority; and let the judgement of the holy Catholic Church, wherever that can be fairly and probably ascertained, let that which was heard and taught from the beginning, be the one rule for our practice in holy things, and interpretation of holy words.

Here some person may say in his heart, "It is very true, the rule was a good and sufficient one for the time when it was given, and long after: but how are people to apply it in these later times, when the sins and negligences of Christians have been punished by so much doubt and division?" This may be said, and there is, alas! but too much reason in it; reason enough to hinder all from being over bold and confident, yet not so much reason but that a humble Christian may walk in safety; and if he prove right at last, it will signify little his having gone some way on the road in dimness and perplexity. With the great doubt of all, which so many of our brethren have more or less reason to live in, whether one is in the Church or no, we, by God's blessing, may hope that we are little concerned: thanks to that distinguishing mercy which has preserved to us, through so many ages, and among so many dangers, the holy apostolical creeds and ministries, such as they were at the beginning, and the holy Sacraments, the means of our communion with Christ. We have but to keep to one Prayer Book in all respects, and we may trust that we are safe, as to our faith, in all fundamental points. And in respect of all lesser difficul-

ties, we are safe also, if we do but submit our judgment to that portion of the Church universal in which the providence of God has placed us. We are free, therefore, did we but know our own happiness, to watch carefully our own practice, without any distressing doubt as to our Creed and Christian Communion.

With too many of us there may be doubt and difficulty, as to the degree in which our sad disobediences may have forfeited our baptismal grace, and deprived us of our place in the holy Church. But even so, practically our way is plain. True repentance, humble and hearty confession, with ministerial absolution if need so require, patient submission to what God shall lay upon us by way of penance, and devoutly applying to Him for perfect reconciliation in the blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood: these are the means which He has graciously given us for the removal even of that worst of doubts, whether our sins have not turned us out of His Church altogether.

For the rest, whoever has either kept, as man may keep, his baptismal innocency, or is duly exercising himself in such humble repentance, may be relieved at once from all agonizing perplexities, in matters either of faith or worship, by simply holding to the Scriptures as interpreted by the Church in the Prayer Book. Thus, whether this or that man teach him, the teaching will not be of man but of God. Whether it be Paul who speaks, or Apollos, or Cephas, all will be to him the same teaching and the same belief. Thus shall we be kept from the strife of tongues, secretly and silently in the Lord's



tabernacle. We shall be hid in God's Presence, from the provoking of all men, from many temptations to pride and uncharitableness, which they can hardly avoid, who without some kind of pastoral call are forward to take part in questionings on points of religion. God's Presence will keep us from it; that is, the continual sense of that peculiar Presence, that intimate union with Him in Christ Jesus, with which, as members of His Church, we are gifted. However disturbing what we hear, we shall be enabled to hold our peace at the Presence of the Lord God.

There will be better hope of our improving in the great work of personal repentance, when our minds are not distracted by doubts and controversies, but lean on the Church: we shall be free to go on from day to day in more strictness and self-command, gradually and unconsciously, as children learn love to their parents; and so much the more surely. Our first beginnings and our daily progress will still go on, by God's blessing, to throw a more beautiful and blessed light on one another. We shall see fresh meaning and beauty, comforts and supports we had never dreamed of, rebukes and warnings hitherto passed over, in the words which we had been taught from our very youth, as the changes of weather from day to day bring out the forms and colours of Nature, to make those who have an eye for it continually aware of beauties which they had before overlooked. Through whatever human hands it may please God to dispense our instruction, there will be always something to remind us of the awful moments when our heavenly life began, and when it received its chief seals and augmentations; of the holy regenera-

ting font whereby we were made members of Christ; of the sacred seal of Confirmation, which gave us more and more of the strengthening Spirit; of our first Communion, and of the awful question, whether we are now as worthy to receive those unspeakable gifts as we were then.

All these things the services of the Church, duly used, bring continually into our minds; and they will not fail also to deepen in a thoughtful person the impressions which he has received from God's providence over himself; from the turns of sickness and health, disappointment and success; from the loss and acquisition of dear kinsmen and friends. The Church, all our life long, will be to us like a high mountain in a day's journey; we shall feel that it is the same great object to us in age as in youth, only contemplated from a different side; and that it is still the token of an unutterable, unchangeable Presence. Old parental and pastoral sayings will recur perpetually with newer and fuller meanings, and our first impressions of the most holy words of Scripture will be very often brought to mind, in that deeper and graver sense, which the approach of death and judgement shews to be contained in them. Till at last, when, we know not, death and judgement will themselves arrive: the veil will be drawn up for ever, and the whole scheme of providential mercy, which we have been living under, shall be made known to us, to be looked into, loved, and adored, more and more, eternally.

This we may humbly say, was what the All-merciful designed for us, when He caused us to be grafted into His holy Church. May it please Him

that the gracious design may not be made void by our sins, nor marred in any degree by our substituting personal and human preferences, choices of our own, for that one great and saving choice which He made for us before we could know! He chose us, we read, "from the beginning, unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Can we choose better for ourselves? Nay, Christian brethren, let His choice be ours, both now and for evermore.



## SERMON XXXIX.

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AS WE ARE, SUCH ARE OUR PRAYERS.

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE xviii. 11.

*“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are.”*

It may do us much good to consider sometimes very seriously, that such as men are, such they come to their prayers. What I mean is this. We go into a Church, we see a number of persons come together: outwardly and in the sight of men all are engaged in the same service; they kneel, they stand up, they say psalms and prayers, all together: but in the sight of God each one fills his own separate place, has his own inward look and air and features. God reads what is within, and sees that although one says the same words and uses the same postures as another, yet no two of their hearts and minds are exactly alike. The Angels, too, watching us as they do in secret, and when we think no one is nigh, perceive also a greater difference in worshippers than we men can possibly be aware of. They know, when a man comes from his secret sins into this holy assembly,

and when he goes back to them again: and many times, no doubt, according to their holiness and zeal, they are filled with a kind of horror at men's presumption in coming here boldly and impenitently, while all the neighbours perhaps, in their blindness and ignorance, are admiring those very persons, and accounting them patterns of goodness.

We may imagine, for example, what kind of thoughts must have been in Angelic minds, when such an one as Balaam came to say his prayers to God. They might say to one another, 'Look at this person: he comes and prays God in words to shew him what he ought to do, whether he should go along with the heathen messengers, and set about cursing God's people, or no: so he prays, but in heart he is all the time wishing to obtain at all events the gold and silver, the honours and riches, which Balak promised him. What is the use of such a prayer?'

Again, there were Angels, no doubt, looking on, when Saul prayed and offered his sacrifices, without waiting for Samuel, contrary to the Lord's command. How differently must such his behaviour have seemed in the sight of those heavenly watchers and of the ordinary sort of men standing by! *these* admiring him for being so good as to pray and offer sacrifice at all; the Angels on the other hand, who knew of Samuel's command, waiting to see when and how God's judgements would come upon Saul for so great a sin.

Or you may draw a kind of picture in your own mind of our Lord's enemies, while they were seeking His life, the Chief Priests and Pharisees, and the rest of them, at their prayers. We know that they were

highly esteemed in the sight of men : the whole multitude would stand around, and watch their behaviour as something more excellent than usual : and here and there, very likely, some humble person might stand at a distance, and wish himself but half as good as they were : yet all the while the heavenly messengers, who were by them in their secret sins, who heard their malicious whisperings one with another against our innocent Lord, might be wondering how God could spare them, why His lightnings did not come down at once and strike such unworthy deceivers to the earth.

What a difference must it have been, if one of those Angelic guardians had at any time to pass from such an hypocritical Pharisee to the room where one like holy Cornelius was employed in his daily devotions, he who was truly a just and devout man, and one who feared God : yet he outwardly, in the sight of men, did but observe the same days and hours, and recite the same psalms and perhaps say the same prayers as these shameful pretenders to holiness. Outwardly and publicly it was all one : but inwardly in the sight of God and privately in the sight of the Angels, how wide, alas ! the separation, how fearful the contrast !

To take another instance : Ahab and Hezekiah, two kings at several times over God's people, heard each of them very bad news : and each of them did, as it were, spread the letter before the Lord : but Ahab's repentance was but on the outside, and only for a little moment : Hezekiah's faith and trust was the settled purpose of his heart and practice of his life. Men could not discern between them : but



God and His Angels could: and so it may be in any of our congregations and families. Two neighbours kneel by one another in Church, two brothers and sisters join alike in the same prayers at home: and one of them in the sight of God may prove an Ahab, the other a Hezekiah. It is an awful thought, but so it must surely often be.

I will mention another case, very awful too in its way, yet full of soothing and comfort. When the Blessed Virgin Mary knelt down at her prayers among the other maidens in the synagogue at Nazareth, it may be that men thought of her as of no more than an ordinary maiden, good indeed and respectable, but yet only such as that there were many more like her. Yet all the while she was in God's sight the Mother of our Lord, and the greatest of all saints. And the holy Angels knew her to be most highly favoured, and blessed among women. Even so by God's great mercy it may happen that in any Christian congregation there may be some one or more persons, little thought of among men, but in the sight of God and His Angels of great price: such as shall prove at the last day to have been great and true saints, sitting with Christ on His throne to judge His people. We perhaps, in our foolish and earthly fancy, thought little of them when they were among us: we knew they meant well, but rather pitied them for their ignorance of many things: we little thought, as we knelt beside them, how much we ourselves, and perhaps the whole world, was indebted to their earnest and simple prayers. Whether there are any such in any particular congregation, whether there are any such

among us, He only knows, to Whom all hearts be open: but in the mean time it is a comfort to think, that there may be such in any place. And the consideration, that, for aught we know, we may be close to some of these hidden saints, may both relieve us when we are distressed and doubtful through the many that fall away, and may also greatly encourage and put us in heart, in whatsoever we try to do for the sake of Christ and His Church.

I have thus shewn by various instances, ending with the Blessed Mother of our Lord, how persons may pray together, may say the same prayers, may join in the same psalms, may seem to almost all around them exactly alike, and yet before the blessed inhabitants of heaven, who see things as they really are, they may be as far apart from each other as the greatest saint from the most incorrigible sinner. Now if this seems strange to any man, he has but to consider our Lord's parable, set before us in the Gospel for the day, and he will see presently how it may be so.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican.” Both went up into the temple together. They went to the right place, and as we may suppose at the right hour, the hour of prayer. So far, there was no difference. But by the time their prayers were said, and it was time to go home, there was all the difference in the world between them. One went down to his house justified rather than the other, i. e. one was forgiven and the other not: one had grace and help from above bestowed on him in answer to his prayers, the other had no such blessing. Why was this? Our Saviour

has plainly told us, and all who know any thing of the Gospel, I suppose, know this. It was because the Pharisee exalted and praised himself, the Publican really humbled himself. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus *with himself*." Observe, it is not said that he spake the words outwardly. He prayed *with himself*: i. e. inwardly, and in the hearing of Him Who hears our silent thoughts, this was the meaning of his devotions. What *words* he used outwardly, or whether he used any at all, or went over any in his memory, *that* is not of so much consequence: for aught we can tell, he might use the best of all words, he might repeat the very same form of prayer which the Publican did, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and yet his real prayer, that which he prayed with himself, might be no other than that proud and self-satisfied saying, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." For we know it is but too common when people are on their knees, saying the prayers of the Church, or other good prayers—I say it is but too common for them to be thinking of something else: and if at such times they permit themselves to be taken up with inwardly praising themselves, and wishing themselves joy that they are in any respect better and wiser than other men, this is the very fault of the Pharisee. And *is* this so very uncommon? Is it not but too certain, that the devil is continually tempting us all to have high thoughts of ourselves, and that he is specially busy in that way, when we kneel down to pray with a little more seriousness than usual? Before we are well aware, the thought will come across us, How good this is of me now, how like to such and such a saintly example!



How greatly would such and such persons admire me, if they knew it! This proud thought may be either put down, or it may be encouraged, and permitted to abide in the mind. If it is rightly put down, by prayer and earnest thought of God, then it was a temptation merely, and no sin. But if we at all cherish and indulge this pharisaical praising of ourselves, it will come to a grievous sin indeed. It will quite entirely spoil all our prayers, just as any shocking corruption mingled with sweet incense would spoil it, so that neither God nor man could smell any sweet savour in it.

Now really, my brethren, this is a matter in which we are most of us very much concerned. For as I said (at the beginning of this sermon), such as a man is in his daily life and conversation, such he is when he goes into Church, or kneels down to his private prayers: and if at other times he willingly thinks well of himself, and is glad to hear and seek after his own praise, of course the same mind will come with him to prayer, will mingle with his devotions, will cause him in very deed to have much the same thought as the Pharisee, and so will entirely pollute and spoil his service. While with his lips he is saying the general confession, "But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders;" or the Litany, "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God: have mercy upon us miserable sinners," and is so owning himself with the Publican, a sinner, yet his secret heart being lifted up with self-approbation, his real thought will be to be pleased and thankful that he is not as other men are. My brethren, God give us a heart

to look to this in good time. It will be a fearful thing at the last day, if in all the seemingly good prayers and confessions we have made we should prove to have been in God's sight praising ourselves at our neighbour's expense, yet we are in constant danger of doing so. We are sure to do so, and *that* habitually, unless we exercise ourselves day and night in really learning and trying to think truly, i. e. very, very lowly, of ourselves: and also very gently and kindly of our neighbour. If we do this in our solitary thoughts, and in any company we go into, we shall not be less but more inclined to be humble when we address ourselves directly to God.

I say, we must be charitable as well as humble. That Pharisee failed in both. As to humility, he trusted in himself that he was righteous: and as to charity, he despised others. It does not appear that he bore malice towards the Publican, only that he despised him, and in his heart praised himself by comparison: what if he had prayed in malice or in anger towards him? And what if any one of us Christians, while he says the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," should in his heart be wishing for revenge instead of mercy? So that the true prayer of his heart, put into words, would be, 'Do not forgive such and such an one, till he have done me right, and fairly submitted himself to me?' A strange prayer surely for a sinner to make before his God: yet this is our real prayer, for it is the wish of our hearts, when we say our prayers, indulging any desire of revenge. The same may be said of envy, sinful lust, covetousness, or any other bad and

abominable passion. The envious man's real prayer, what he secretly in his heart offers up night and morning, is this, "O Lord, I grudge my neighbour this good: take it away from him, I beseech thee." The lustful and the covetous man, they also in God's hearing ask each one for his sinful passion to be satisfied: and so *that* is sadly fulfilled in each of them which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake for the severest sentence on God's enemies, "their prayer," which should be the cure of sin, is itself "turned into sin."

All these evil and deadly consequences, come of our not earnestly trying to conform ourselves to the words of our good prayers, but suffering our thoughts, when at prayer, to be carried away with the natural and accustomed dreams of our foolish heart.

On the other hand, who can speak the happiness of those who like this blessed Publican come before God in singleness, and ask Him sincerely, that is humbly, to pardon their sins? They are far happier than they know, as the others are far more miserable. They say in their deep contrition, only, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" and God not only pardons their sins, but gives them a great measure of His saving grace. May be, they are very poor and ignorant: they can but come near, like the woman in the crowd at Capernaum, to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, yet if they come trusting in Him and putting away their sins, virtue will go out of Him to make them perfectly whole: He will say the same to them as to those who come with a great share of knowledge: "<sup>a</sup> Thy faith hath saved thee,

<sup>a</sup> S. Luke vii. 50.



go in peace." May be, they have been great sinners; they feel their sins very bitterly, and they scarcely dare ask for the lowest place in heaven: they can but say, Lord, have mercy: and all the while He may be preparing for them somewhat of the blessing of S. Mary Magdalene, who, without knowing it, was the first to see Jesus risen.

On the whole, this parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, when we seriously consider it, may well carry on our thoughts to the great Day of Account, when all who have prayed before God, or have pretended to pray, shall appear before Him, both sorts continuing in somewhat of the same ignorance with regard to themselves, in which they had prayed and lived all their time on earth. As the Pharisee stood and thanked God that he was not as the generality of men, when in truth he was worse than they, so those on the left hand will say to the Judge in that day, "<sup>b</sup>Have we not prophesied in Thy Name?" "When saw we Thee, and did not minister unto Thee?" As the Publican durst not lift up his eyes, thinking he had done no good thing, so those on the right Hand will say, "When saw we Thee hungry and gave Thee meat?" To both sorts, the final sentence will be a surprise.

So it will be, my brethren, assuredly, for so Jesus Christ hath assured us: and we shall be there, one and all, to see it: and not only to see it, but to receive our portion of it. Let us try to set this before us, if possible, every time we kneel down to pray: let us pray to Him that He would hear the good prayers which He hath taught us, in His own merci-

<sup>b</sup> S. Matt. vii. 22.

ful sense, and not as our wandering and corrupt hearts deserve. When the devil whispers to our hearts, 'You have done well, and now you are praying well,' let us presently think on some of our worst sins, and having so driven away the bad thought, let us go on with our prayers again. Let us offer Christ's prayer to Him continually, as something too good for us ever entirely to understand: and that our blind devotion at night and morning may prosper, let us try to live, by His grace, in blind humility and obedience all day long.

## SERMON XL.

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### TRUE LIBERTY OF HEART, HOW TO BE GAINED.

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. cxix. 32.

*“I will run the way of Thy commandments, when  
Thou hast set my heart at liberty.”*

THIS week the Church instructs us to pray for a more than ordinary measure of holiness. I say “this week,” (not “this day” only,) because I wish that we all, who use the Church Prayer-book should remember that the Collects are appointed to be used not on the Sundays only, but on every day in the week. Those who cannot use them in Church, may yet obtain a great blessing by saying them regularly with their daily prayers in private. If we all did so with all our hearts, we should know by God’s blessing how to pray, far better than we now do. For instance, this week, as I said, we should be practised in asking of Him a more than ordinary measure of holiness. I mean in those words of the Collect, in which we beg that we may have grace “to run the way of His commandments:” it does not say to walk but to run. The expression is taken, as you have just heard, from the 119th Psalm; and



sets forth to us very affectingly the loving thankful heart of the Psalmist: "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty." My heart is not yet at liberty, but it longs and hopes to be so. It is not yet free from worldly desires, cares, and regrets, but it trusts and prays to be so, and when it is, it will serve God more heartily than ever. It will not walk, but run: will not go slowly on, like one who is doing something against his own natural inclination, as a painful duty: but as one who is left at large, to please himself, and do as he likes best. For example, when the heart is entirely at liberty, such liberty as the Psalmist here speaks of, prayer will be no longer an irksome task, but an employment to which the soul naturally returns, when she is left at large, to do as she pleases. Our thoughts and words, in such case, will as naturally tend towards God in heaven, as a spark of fire, not intercepted or blown away, will naturally fly upwards. This is the perfection which we must be always reaching after, though we cannot ever, I suppose, in this world, entirely attain to it.

Moreover, the Psalmist professes concerning his own heart, i. e. concerning the heart of every true servant of God, that the way in which he will proceed thus eagerly and joyfully shall be the way of God's commandments; not his own way, but God's: not what he may at any time guess and fancy to be God's way, but what God's own commandments have clearly declared to be so. Thus (to give again the same example which we before referred to), one whose heart is quite at liberty, in the Psalmist's sense of the word, will not only fly to some sort of prayer as his

favourite employment, when he is left free to choose, but will also among all prayers prefer that which the Lord Himself taught us, and will admire and use all other prayers more or less as they are more or less like the Lord's Prayer.

This then is the liberty of heart which the Psalmist was longing for : this and no other is true Christian liberty : to choose the things which our Lord chooses, approve what He approves, and do what He commands, of our own accord ; our own minds and hearts fully consenting to the motions of His Holy Spirit. This is what the Psalmist longs for in the text, and what the Church would have us pray for in the Collect. I wish you to consider with me, how great need we all have of such a gift, and how we are bound to behave, who pray for it continually.

If a clergyman were to speak to all his congregation one after another, and press it on them, that the time past of their lives may well suffice them to have served God so little, and the world so much, as they have done : to have been so much in earnest in looking after their own vanities, so lazy and lukewarm in works of charity and devotion ; I suppose they would answer one and all, that indeed they cannot deny that they have fallen far short of what they ought and wished to have done : but, they would add, their hearts were not at liberty, they were tied and bound with a kind of chain : and so, in one respect or another, the good which they would, they did not : and the evil which they would not, that they did. And they would give, some one reason, some another, for this sad imperfection. Many would say, and truly, they were so sorely afflicted, they

had such sore trouble of mind or body to endure. They would say, How could I repeat my prayers as I ought; how could I give my whole mind to the work of preparation for Holy Communion; how could I forget earthly things, and fix my mind wholly upon heaven and heavenly desires, while I was lying awake all night with raging pain in some limb or other: when I was fastened to one place or one posture by helpless sinking and feebleness of body, unable to stir hand or foot? Do not talk to such an one as I am of running the way of God's commandments, I have no power to run, nor even to walk, any way at all: I can but lie still and wish myself better, and try to be as patient as I may. Or they might say, "My body indeed has been sufficiently healthful, but I have had no quiet of mind. My heart has ached from morning to night with earnest longings and anxieties for my own or others' welfare. God gave me a place in society, a task to do, a disposition to try and do it well. He gave me a chance to better my outward condition, to improve myself in skill and knowledge, and I was naturally ambitious and wanted to do my best: He gave me friends and kindred, perhaps wife or husband and children; and a heart to love them dearly: how could I help being swallowed up in care for them?" And some may go on and tell you, how they have failed and been disappointed in their wishes and plans and exertions; how their best intentions turned out amiss, and their wisest schemes ended in nothing but loss: and they have felt, and do feel, as if they never could recover it, never could be quite the same men again. And too often, besides the sense of disappointment, and the



shame and vexation attending it, they have to own (if they would own it) the far sadder shame and vexation of remorse for known, wilful, obstinate sin. Their past transgressions still hang on them as a heavy load, they know not which way to turn, what to do, that they may go on serving their Lord in tolerable comfort.

You understand at once, brethren, that all such thoughts and feelings will of course make people very feeble and backward in goodness. Unless they can get rid of these, or learn, by God's grace, how to bear them, their heart, they say, will never be at liberty, they will never be able to run the way of God's commandments. I say, there are a great many, a very great many indeed, who might give some such account of themselves as this, when the minister of Christ comes to them, and asks them how they have been living, how they are still going on, in respect of their duty to God. And what shall he, the minister of Christ, say to them? Why, his task, so far, is not hard: to every one of them, he may give the same advice: to every one who is anxious and lowspirited on any account whatever, the guide and shepherd of souls may say, "At least you may make a good resolution: you may promise to Almighty God and say, 'Only set my heart at liberty, O God, and I will run the way of Thy commandments.' You may resolve this, and pray accordingly, and you need not doubt that He will bless your good resolutions and humble prayers. It will be a great step to true liberty of heart, if you have once made up your mind, on attaining such liberty, to live entirely to God, and have humbly offered up this your purpose to your

gracious Lord and Redeemer, to be blessed and helped by Him. It will be a great step, when you can say truly and really, without deceiving yourself, or dealing lightly with God, 'O Lord, for Christ's sake remove this trouble from me, assuage this my bodily pain, give my poor tormented heart rest from these my fretting cares and temptations, and what remains shall be wholly and entirely Thine: my spirit, and soul, and body, all that I am, and all that I have, it shall be to Thee for a perpetual burnt-offering; nothing will I keep back from Thee; only deliver me from this one evil, give me the victory over this one temptation.' "

We are indeed, all of us, alas! but too apt to make such promises as these, without that humble and earnest purpose of heart, which only can ensure our keeping them. Such purpose of heart is a special gift of the good Spirit of God, and can only be obtained by sincere, continual prayer. And one chief reason why we fail in it, so often and so sadly, is just because we do not pray as we ought; just as in a race people often fail for want of stopping as they ought to recover their breath. For the Breath of God the Holy Spirit is what we need to help us in our Christian course, and we cannot persevere without allowing ourselves seasonable pauses to draw in that Holy Breath.

Only let us try to remember, my brethren, any of us who has had to go through any grievous sickness, in ourselves or in any one dear to us; did we not say to ourselves over and over again, how we would do this and that in the way of repentance and amendment, how we would never, never again permit such

and such a bad word to go out of our mouth, nor indulge our eyes, or other senses, in dangerous liberties, if the Lord would but vouchsafe to withdraw His Hand this once? Well, the Lord did withdraw His Hand, but what became of our good resolutions? Alas, you might as well ask, in the middle of a scorching summer day, What is become of the morning dew? And why was it so? We seemed earnest to ourselves at the time, we did not intend to break our promise, when we made it. 'We seemed earnest to ourselves.' It may be, that was the very mischief: we depended on what we seemed to ourselves, and did not commit the matter entirely to our merciful and true Saviour, with such real prayer as we ought. We trusted in our own heart, and you know what is written of those who do so: "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Surely this is a very simple lesson: surely there is not one of us, who has lived any time in the world, but has learned that lesson by sad experience. Let us for the future at least be humble, while we are courageous in our good resolutions. The humbleness and the courage both depend upon the same thing, our referring the whole, with entire trust, to our Lord. He that does so, will be humble, because he knows that he has nothing of his own to depend on; he will be courageous, because he knows also that his Lord is with him, on Whom he may depend entirely.

There is another thing, which if I mistake not, greatly hinders many of us in those trying moments of our lives. We are sick of our sins, at least in the kind and degree in which we have unhappily indulged them: and we very sincerely long to be



free from the inward anguish and outward punishment which those sins have justly brought upon us. We are willing therefore and eager, not only sincere, in good resolutions and purposes to a certain extent: and so far is well; it is a good beginning: but from the one resolution and purpose to which we must some time come, in order to have our Lord's absolution made sure to us, we still shrink and draw back. What is that one resolution? It is a true purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord in *all* things, to forsake *all* wilful sin, to give up *all* worldly good, if need be, for His sake. You will recollect, many of you, I dare say, before I have named him, a person in the Gospel who is an instance of this kind of failure,—the rich young man who came to our Lord with such an honest ingenuous desire to do good, that our Lord beholding him, loved [him]; the heart of Him Who is both God and Man warmed (as we speak,) towards that young person, and He told him something that He would have him do, to be perfect: but the young man's heart failed him: he had not the courage then for the one thing needful; he did but go away sorrowful. For aught we are told, that young man may have afterwards thought better of it; he may have been one of those favoured ones, who on and after the day of Pentecost did what our Lord now called on him to do: he may have done as S. Barnabas did, may have sold his great possessions and laid the money at the Apostles' feet, and taken up the cross and followed Jesus. But at the time when Jesus called him, he had not courage to follow him. Like Naaman, he had expected something different, and could not make up his mind

to do the very thing that he was bidden, though by the manner of his question he had professed himself ready for any thing. So in our good resolutions, we too often make a reserve, half unknown to ourselves. We say to our Lord, 'Command what Thou pleasest,' but in our hearts we whisper, 'to be sure He will not command so and so, *that* would be *too* hard, we could not bear *that*.' Nay, my brethren, but let us not fear to engage ourselves. Remember that He with Whom we have to do has done more for each one of us, than He had done even for holy David when he wrote the words in our text. The Lord *has* set our hearts at liberty. He has made us members of Christ, and children of God; has made us partakers of that life which is in His Son; so that as the limbs of the body are able to move and act by the life and virtue which they have from the body, so we are able, if we will, to think the thoughts, speak the words, and do the deeds, of virtue and holiness, by our union with Jesus Christ through His Spirit. He gave us that power at first in our infancy, in Holy Baptism; He hath enlarged it from time to time, first in Confirmation, then in Holy Communion. If we, alas! have impaired it by our sins, He is ready to restore it by His Absolution in His Church, on our true confession, repentance, and amendment.

Relying on these His sure and gracious engagements, let us not fear to engage ourselves to Him. In all our affliction and anguish, let us fall down as it were on the knees of our heart, and in His sight make a vow, that until He deliver us we will try to be patient and thankful, and if He deliver us we will

serve Him, not only more heartily than ever, but as well as ever we can. When He has in any measure delivered us, then will come the trial of this our vow. When our heart is enlarged, then God and His angels will see which way it spreads itself, upwards or downwards, towards God or towards the world. Oh see to it, dear brethren, you whose hearts are in comparison at liberty, as having been, by God's mercy, already delivered, or as having never been in chains, since your Baptism, to deadly sin, see to it that you walk answerably to this great, this unspeakable mercy, by really running the way of His commandments. Lose no more time. Put forth all your strength. Do not be looking about you. Those who are running, and are afraid of being too late, are not so foolish as to stop to play, or to admire the prospects by the road side. Remember our Lord's saying to those who had a great work in hand: "Salute no man by the way." He spoke it to His ministers in particular, that they should not lose His time, and the time of His people's souls, in idle civilities. But the same warning belongs to you all, for your time also is His, and it is short, and a great work to be done in it.

And do not fear that in thus binding yourselves to His service you will be incurring a heavy burden too heavy for you to bear. No: His service is perfect freedom: His chains are the bonds of love: no more bondage than the waiting of a loving mother on her child, or of an affectionate wife on her husband. Here is the promise, if we have but grace to receive it. "a Thou shalt see, and flow together, and

<sup>a</sup> Is. lx. 5.



thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged." God promises to enlarge your heart, if being enlarged you are minded to devote it to Him.

O that we would practise ourselves, and pray, to have faith in these sayings, and to receive them in earnest. Our life would by degrees come (though we should not know it ourselves) to be like the doings of saints on earth, and we ourselves made ready to live with the angels in heaven: whose joy is, that they fulfil *all* His commandments, and hearken unto the voice of *every one* of His words.

## SERMON XLI.

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### THE CHURCH, AN UNWELCOME PROPHET.

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Kgs. xxii. 8.

*“There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”*

ONE of the portions of sacred history which the Church has been most careful to teach all her diligent hearers, by selecting almost the whole of it to be read in the course of her Sunday lessons, is the life and death of Ahab, the worst of the kings of Israel. The reason is, that his crimes and errors, however shocking, were so very natural, so very like what we see and feel every hour among ourselves.

For example, nothing can be more natural or more common, yet surely few things more inexcusable, than the temper expressed in these words: “I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good of me, but evil.” Nothing, I say, can be more natural than

this: for who likes to be told of evil to come, and hindered from pursuing favourite schemes, upon which he has long set his heart? especially when, as in this case, his conscience tells him that he deserves no good, and cannot therefore expect God's blessing. It is no wonder men should shrink from advice which passes so unfavourable a judgement on them, and represents their own condition to themselves and others as beyond measure dangerous and disgraceful. But although this is no *wonder*, it is a very great folly indeed: folly of that inexcusable kind, which is sure in the next world, and almost sure in this, to bring after it the punishment of deliberate wickedness. For how earnestly soever one's heart may be set upon this or that thing, who that coolly considers for a moment would not wish to be warned in time, so that if it were really evil for him, he might give up the pursuit of it altogether? Who does not see, in every one, and despise, in every one but himself, the folly and childishness of accounting a man your enemy, because he tells you the truth for your good?

The thing cannot be put in a stronger light than it is by the circumstances of the king of Israel, when he spoke the words in the text. He was just entering on a dangerous war, and he knew well enough, for all his heathenish behaviour, that there was only one Power in the world that could bring him safe out of it; and that Power was God Almighty. But his conscience told him also, but too clearly, that he was in the sight of that Just and Holy Being stained with many of the worst sins, an idolater, a murderer, a corrupter of his people; to which sins



he was so deeply besotted, that no warning, he well knew, had any chance of making him repent in earnest. Good reason had he to think, that neither in this war, nor in any thing else which he should undertake, he was likely to obtain the blessing of God, or to receive an encouraging answer from His prophets, should he ask their advice what to do. Accordingly, instead of going to Him Who alone was sure to give a true answer, he betakes himself to the miserable shift of asking certain corrupt prophets, who were ready enough to use God's Name for any vile purpose of deceiving souls; these he assembles together, and asks them, "Shall I go up to Ramoth-Gilead and prosper?" They answered, as a lying spirit had taught them, "Go up and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Upon this encouragement, in which it should seem he had himself no real reliance, he makes up his mind to the unspeakable madness of venturing into danger without first trying to make God his friend by sincere repentance. And having still one friend who feared God, when that friend advises him to find out a true prophet of the Lord, and enquire of him also, he betrays his own foolish and wicked heart by those words in the text; "There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good of me, but evil." Here then you have a person, wise enough generally in worldly matters (for such undoubtedly king Ahab seems to have been), refusing, in a matter of life and death, and that to be decided in a very few days,—refusing, I say, so much as to ask advice of the only good adviser he could find, because he suspected the

advice would be unpleasant: refusing, as long as he dared, to enquire of the Lord, lest the Lord should dissuade him for his good. And to complete the picture of what people come to, who have lived so as to make God their enemy, when he had been shamed into sending for Micaiah, he only raged against him, and totally disregarded his warning. He goes on obstinately into the war, and is killed shamefully in the first battle, leaving a curse upon his whole family.

It requires only reading over, to pass a right judgement on all this. But now let us suppose for a moment, that, as we by the help of Holy Scripture are enabled to look back on the case of Ahab, and wonder at his rash impiety, so Ahab in his turn might have been taught, as it were, to look onward: suppose that Micaiah, or some other prophet, had come to him by the word of the Lord, and told him of a sort of people, who should one day appear in the world, to whom God would reveal for a certainty, what in Ahab's time men only guessed at; the doctrine of eternal life or death, heaven or hell, prepared for them hereafter. Suppose Ahab were told of a sort of people, who should hear from the Son of God Himself, that a worm which never dies, and a fire which never shall be quenched, is prepared for the wicked; and that hell, the place where they must go, if they die in their sins, is well worth avoiding at the cost of a right eye plucked out, or a right arm cut off; would not Ahab, with much reason, have said, that these things, were unspeakably more terrible than what God had threatened to him by Elijah; his own violent death, dogs licking

his blood, and the utter and bloody destruction of his family? And might he not also have added truly, that, bad, and inexcusable as he might be, men who could despise such warnings, and live entirely for this world, would give a still more frightful proof of their wilful blindness, and hatred of good things?

Suppose he were told all this, and were informed also, that these people, knowing themselves to be in such danger, would most of them hate to be reminded of it; would, on purpose, get out of the way of every body and every thing which should put them on their guard against it; would consider themselves greatly affronted and injured, if one should endeavour charitably to open their eyes, and shew them how near they have come to it unawares.

Going more into particulars, let us suppose that Ahab could have had also communicated to him, in the same way, by the Spirit of prophecy, the future institution of the Christian ministry, and the manner in which that would be received. Let us suppose that the prophet had said to him, 'The same Divine Person, Who shall tell the world clearly what will be the fate of impenitent sinners in another world, will also lay down His life to save them, truly repenting, from it: and having so done, He will rise again, and continue among men for a time; for this, among other purposes, viz., to appoint certain messengers to go out in His Name, and teach all nations, and all generations, by themselves or their successors, the bitter consequences of sin unrepented of. And God's good providence will so order things, that there shall never be wanting in after ages persons commissioned



to put the world in mind of these great truths: commissioned, I say, by God Himself, and bound to Him, by the most solemn oath, to rebuke sinners in due season; to use both public and private admonition, and make every one aware of his danger, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given. So that the fearful tidings of judgement to come, and the good tidings of salvation by the Son of God, shall be brought home to men's own doors, and no soul at the last will be able to plead that it perished for want of 'knowing better.'”

To this account of the Christian ministry, and of the solemn oath by which Christian pastors are bound, let us suppose the Spirit of prophecy to have added further some notion of the general fashion of the world's behaviour to the messengers of the Gospel, such as we see it in our days. Suppose Ahab had been further told, The ministers of the Son of God being thus left in the world to discharge, in His absence, their high office, thus and thus they will be received: many persons will avoid their sermons, for fear of being made uneasy by strong remonstrances against things on which they have set their hearts; and many more will shrink from allowing the instructions, which in public were spoken to all, to be applied by private reproof to themselves; some, being so reproved by their pastors, will be affronted all their lives long, will hate their persons, and despise their instruction; and hardly any will thank them, in earnest, for doing them the very greatest service which one man can do to another, for opening their eyes to the worst of all evils, just as they were bringing it upon

themselves. So that the very name which means a messenger of Christ, shall become among many a word of reproach; and they who seek to do good in that way, will be forced to use as much forethought, and invent as many various devices, not to fail of the good they wish, as the crafty schemers of this world use, in order to accomplish the worst of mischief.

If he, whom we blame for his usage of Micaiah, could have heard such a representation as this, and surely it is no more than a true representation of what happens daily among Christians,—if Ahab, I say, could have had all this prophesied to him, would he not, with reason, have exclaimed against our times, as we, when we read his history, are apt to exclaim against him? And bad as his usage of Micaiah was, yet surely for Christian people to shun and dislike Christ's ministers, because they do not like to be told they are in a bad way, for the Galatians to account S. Paul their enemy, because he tells them saving truth, this is as much worse than the conduct of Ahab, as the Gospel, against which we sin, is better and clearer than the law and the prophets, by which only God had then revealed Himself.

But this is not all, nor the worst. Other circumstances might be added, in such a prophetic view of the Christian world as I have now supposed, to leave us yet further without excuse. It might be mentioned, how God's Holy Word, the Bible, made in due time perfect and entire by the addition of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour, would come in aid of His ministers every where, and in

their place many times, when they could not be in person : there being no individual among us Christians, so poor or so unlearned, but he has it in his power, by the blessing of God, to hear or read out of that book enough to understand his duty and his danger. What then might not a man say, if he had been told beforehand of the way in which the Bible should be brought within every one's reach ; being told, at the same time, how it would be treated by the greater number ? that however much it might be admired in words, it would be practically despised and slighted ? That people would let it lie by them for years, hardly ever looking into it : that many would read it for mere amusement ; some as a task which is well over ; some out of pride of scholarship, or by way of shewing themselves holier than others : hardly any for the true purpose, that of knowing their own faults ; and trying to become fitter for heaven. I say, could Ahab, or any one else, have known all this beforehand, he might with some reason have thought that a generation which could be guilty of so abusing God's written word, had no great right to blame him for his dislike of the word spoken by the prophet.

And if he could have been further told, to crown all, that the Blessed Son of God Himself, the Author and Giver of everlasting salvation, shall promise and offer, most affectionately, to continue His spiritual presence with His people, by giving Himself to them, His Body and Blood, for the food of their souls in His holy Sacrament ; and that they would, almost universally, shun and forsake that Divine Presence, because in order to approach it worthily,



they must look their sins in the face, and this they would not have the heart to do; I say, could all this have been foreshewn to Ahab, at any rate he would not have wanted company to keep him in countenance in his treatment of Micaiah. Is not his the very language, in which sinners too often speak to themselves of the Holy Communion? When you are called on to be better Christians, and are reminded, that there is yet one way, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by which you obtain grace from the Lord: do you never, like Ahab, reject the advice, with some such unthankful expression as this: "I dread and dislike the Lord's Supper, because the examination, which ought to go before it would not prophesy good of me, but evil?" It would shew you, that you are in a bad way; which is the last thing you want to be told. And yet if it really be so, you must be told it or lose yourself for ever.

Unquestionably, in all these things; in dislike of good advice from every quarter, especially from the messengers of Jesus Christ; in neglect of His word; in contempt of His Sacraments; the comparison between the generality of Christians, and Ahab shrinking from the warnings of Micaiah, would make them out much worse than he was. For many of them are in a fair way to come at last to hate and shun, not only God's messengers, but God Himself; because continuing, as they are, impenitent, He doth not prophesy good of them, but evil.

But, here, as in every other subject, our self-deceit will be busy with excuses; and among the very first which offer themselves, not a few are generally heard,

drawn from the infirmities of the human teacher, through whom the Divine warning proceeds. Some warnings, men say, are unkindly delivered, some rudely, some unseasonably; and one very common remark is, when people are told of the faults, that the adviser has mistaken the *kind* of fault. 'There is enough about me that is wrong, I know, but in this particular respect, with which I am charged, I consider myself quite blameless.' This is a mode of taking reproof, which almost every one must have observed. Now suppose it really so, that the warning in this instance *is* misplaced; what would a reasonable man do? Continue just where he was, without any reformation whatever? Nay, but he would turn his mind in good earnest to those parts of his own conduct, in which he cannot deny that he wants improvement. Just as if a house was found out of repair, though not exactly where the owner had been told, he would not leave it just as it was, and go away affronted with the person who told him of it, but would put it in order where need was, and be much obliged by the timely warning which enabled him to do so. Then again, you should consider, that there is great danger of your mistaking yourself, and thinking you have no need to be warned on a point in which, perhaps, your wiser friends perceive you are most open to temptation. S. Peter thought he had no need to be warned against turning coward and denying his Master; but his Master Himself knew better, and repeated the warning a good many times, that it might never be forgotten after the event: and though the Apostle was grieved at the charge, and spoke vehemently in disavowal of it, we

do not read that he was offended with his Lord; he did not, as Ahab did, and as many foolish sinners do, hate his adviser for prophesying evil concerning him. So far, we shall do well to follow his example; and if we add to it, that in which he unfortunately failed, a due mistrust and fear of ourselves, believing ourselves capable of any sin, if we are not continually on our guard, continually seeking aid from above: then we shall be thankful for any well meant warning, how little soever, otherwise, we might seem to ourselves to need it. And perhaps those who are so much offended, when a friend or adviser mistakes their case, and offers what they account needless *censure*—such persons might do well to consider, what they would think of the same man's *praise*, if their conscience told them in any case that he was undeservedly bestowing *that* upon them. If they can find it in their hearts to be pleased with the one, surely they have no right whatever to despise the other so very much.

Some do not deny their need of warning, only 'they could not endure this or that warning; it was so rudely, so unseasonably delivered.' But they should remember the end and purpose which the adviser had in his mind, in delivering what they call "a prophesy of evil" concerning them. Perhaps he saw them so dull and dead in their sins, that he thought it needful to be somewhat rude and vehement in his manner, the better to awaken them and make them more attentive. As our Lord Himself, the meekest and most charitable of all teachers, feared not to tell His disciples, that "if they would come after Him, they must *hate* father and mother,



brethren and sisters, wife and children, and their own soul also." "Hate them," that is, be ready to forsake them: which our Lord expressed by this startling word *hate*, in order that their attention might be thoroughly roused; that they might be set upon inquiring, What *can* He mean? And having inquired, might not soon forget it. It may be, that what seems to you rudeness, is mere friendly vehemence, intended, like this word of our Divine Master, to put you more thoroughly on your guard. And, as to a warning being unseasonable or indiscreet, it is in every one's power at any time, as far as he is himself concerned, to prevent its doing harm in that way, by merely taking it as it was meant, and not being offended at it.

Finally, to take the worst case of all; advice, be it never so unkindly delivered—the very taunts of reproachful enemies—may do a man the greatest good, if he will consider them in this true light, namely, as being permitted by God to humble him the more for his great sins. David, the man after God's own heart, though long before Christian times, made this truly Christian use of the curses uttered against him by Shimei, when he called him a bloody man. It brought his sin to his remembrance; for in the matter of Uriah, once in his life, he had acted like a bloody man; and he acknowledged, "the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." Abusive words, and even malicious calumnies, thus taken in the spirit of David, as hints to a man what he would deserve, if God should deal strictly with him according to his secret sins, might help him greatly in the work of repentance, instead of souring his

temper, as they too often do, and causing anger, malice, and revenge. To say no more of Christian humility: common sense to be sure would teach one to remember, both in the last-mentioned case of advice unkindly given, and also in the former cases, which supposed it well-meaning, but mistaken in the manner, that any error of that kind in your admonisher may put him in the wrong, but cannot put you in the right. If Micaiah had been malicious towards Ahab, still the prophecy of God was true. We have our separate accounts to give; and no error, no vice even, in a minister of Christ, or in any one else, can excuse you for hating those warnings, which are delivered to you, out of Christ's own mouth.

Least of all will any such excuse be allowed, as your not being able to endure an admonition, because it seems to prophesy evil concerning you, and would make you uneasy, and put you out of spirits. You know well enough that there is nothing in the Bible to make you uneasy or put you out of spirits, if you will in earnest part with your sins. Do this with purpose of heart, relying on your good God and Saviour, and you will no more hate that voice, which prophesies evil, not to you, but to your sins. You will then be really glad and thankful when any one tells you quietly of your faults; and not spiteful, nor at all unforgiving, though you be told of them somewhat roughly. Think for a moment, what peace and comfort, even in this present life, would ensue upon warnings being kindly and seriously taken; what sweetness and good temper such a rule would spread over our daily conversation with each

other : how certain we should be to go on from day to day improving in our duties both to God and our neighbour.

The matter may be brought into a short compass. Will any Christian repent him at the hour of death, as having borne warnings too patiently ? Or will he think, when the Day of Judgement comes, that it was best to turn away from serious advice, as not prophesying good of him, but evil ?



## SERMON XLII.

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### THE SHINING OF MOSES' FACE.

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 COR. iii. 16.

*“When it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.”*

THIS verse relates to a very remarkable manifestation of the glory of God by Moses to the children of Israel, which first began at Mount Sinai, when they were waiting to receive the two tables of the covenant at his hands, but seems to have continued afterwards, as long as he was alive to go in and out among them. You will find it in the latter part of the 34th chapter of Exodus.

When he came down from the mount with the two tables of the covenant in his hands, he “wist not that the skin of his face shone,” or, as S. Paul writes it, “had become glorified” while God was talking with him. Forty days and forty nights he had been gazing on the glory of the Lord; and as the mountains and woods and waters and all the things that we see, receive brightness from the sun when he shines out upon them, and give back his rays so that even those who have their backs to the sun, beholding the reflection of him from the things which are

naturally dark, may form some notion how brightly and gloriously he is rising : so those who saw Moses when he came down from that unspeakable Presence, seeing the rays which streamed from his brow (it seems to have been a kind of horned light, a token of the blessed Cross, wherewith all Christians are sealed in body and spirit) : Aaron, I say, and the rest of the nobles of Israel, seeing the glory of that light, were amazed, somewhat in the same way as the people who saw our Lord after His Transfiguration : and they were afraid to come near Moses : whereupon he, till he had done speaking with them, put a veil over his face. And so the custom continued ever afterwards, that when he had been inquiring of the Lord for them, and had to report His messages to them, he put a veil over his face : but when he had again to draw near the Lord, to receive His commands for the people, then he took the veil away. "Till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face ; but when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the vail off until he came out."

Now this is the very circumstance which S. Paul refers to in the text. He says that Moses, thus speaking to the Jews, was a figure of the law or the Old Testament, speaking to those who have carnal or Jewish hearts. It has, as it were, a veil on its face : they cannot look to the end of it, that is, they cannot see Jesus Christ, Who is the End of the law, to Whom every thing in the Old Testament points. Him they cannot see through the types and shadows, with which His holy Name is for a time wrapped up.

But when Moses turned to the Lord again, he took the veil off his face; and so says S. Paul in the text: when any one turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, presently "the vail is taken away:" when a Jew comes to have faith in Christ, and to read the Bible by the light of His glorious Gospel, the mist and darkness rolls off in great measure, which before wrapped up the old prophecies. At present, "even unto this day, remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament."

When Moses spoke of old to their fathers, the veil was upon his face; but now when he is read to them, the veil is upon their hearts. In old time it was God's doing; the Scriptures were made obscure for a time on purpose; the types and prophecies could not be understood till their fulfilment: but it is now the Jews' own doing; it is their own perverseness, refusing to see Christ in their Scriptures. And as then Moses' face, so now their hearts must be turned towards the Lord Christ, before the veil can be taken away.

Thus S. Paul speaks; thinking, most likely, as in many other places, of his own history, and of God's dealings with him in particular. You know, in his early days, he was a sort of figure and type of the whole Jewish nation, in his great and bitter enmity to Jesus Christ: "how beyond measure he persecuted the Church of God and wasted it." Why? Because his face was not towards the Lord. When he read the Law, he saw only the outward sign; he knew nothing as yet of its end and hidden meaning.

But when our Saviour, in compassion to his well-



meaning but blind zeal, called to him from heaven, and touched his heart by His grace; when he had embraced Christ's service, not for any earthly or visible reward, but with the earnest hope and certain expectation of suffering great things for His Name's sake: when S. Paul's heart had thus turned to the Lord, when he had embraced the Cross, and begun to taste its sweetness, then the scales fell from his eyes; then he saw the purpose and drift of the ceremonies and sacrifices, the temple and tabernacle, the crown on David's head, and the anointing oil on Aaron's; then he understood what that Zion is, which is to endure for ever, and how God might have an universal Church, and yet every promise to Israel as His own peculiar people, be fulfilled. All this and more S. Paul understood, when he had turned to the Lord Jesus: till then, he could no more understand it than the children of Israel could see through the veil which Moses had put upon his face: they might see that there was something glorious, and so might he; but how glorious, and what in particular it signified, and how near it brought them to God, they could not yet know, for they could not yet know Christ. No more could S. Paul, nor the Jews of his time, as long as they refused to know Him.

And here we must observe well, what "knowing Christ," and "turning to Him," mean in such places as these. It was not simply knowing that there was such a Person, attending to what they heard and saw of Him: in such a way they might and did know Him, as S. Paul himself says, only after the flesh: but to know Him, here means knowing Him

after His Spirit: "knowing Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His Sufferings, being made conformable unto His Death;" and "turning to Him," means turning to His Cross; taking it up and following Him. When a person had done this sincerely, he would find quite a new light break in upon places in the Old Testament, which before he had no true knowledge of.

He would learn what was meant by a lamb without spot or blemish, to be eaten with bitter herbs, having been first sacrificed to deliver the people by the sprinkling of its blood.

Again, he would understand the meaning of circumcision; how it marked men as belonging to Him, Whom if we would serve, we must mortify all worldly and carnal lusts, and not think too much to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, if the good of our souls so require.

He would see why the people were fed with manna, to signify the true Bread from heaven, that is, the Body of Christ crucified, which only can maintain our spiritual life as we journey through the wilderness of this world.

He would understand why the tabernacle and temple had two parts, the holy place and the most holy, and why the most holy could only be entered once a year, and then not without blood: this, I say, S. Paul would understand when his heart came to be set on heaven, on that heaven which was purchased for us with Blood, and for which we must be prepared by tribulation. These are a few out of many instances which may help us to understand how the veil was taken away from the face of Moses, that

is, from the Old Testament, when S. Paul, or any other Jew, was converted, and turned to the Lord Christ.

But does this saying apply to Jews only, and to the reading of the Old Testament only? Or is it so, that we also, though we have been Christians many years, may have a veil upon our hearts, and *that*, in the reading of the New Testament as well as the Old, of the Gospel as well as of the law, of S. Paul and the epistles as well as of Moses and the prophets? Surely it may be our case too; after all that has been done for us, we may but too easily, if we will, yet go on in stumbling and in ignorance; if we do not quite grope like the blind at noon-day, we may yet be but in a half waking sort of condition, like those who were journeying with S. Paul when the bright light shone round him on the way, and he was converted. He was converted; they did but stand speechless, "hearing a voice, but seeing no man."

Nay, I wish there were good reason to hope, that the greater part of Christ's people were even so much awake as this: to feel and know that there is something wonderful going on around them and within them; though they might be yet far from imagining how very near and glorious His Presence is, Whose voice they dimly and rarely hear. But as things are, it is a shame and sorrow to speak it, and yet the word must be spoken, even to this day, when Christ is read and preached, the veil is upon many a Christian heart.

Is it not too plain, that very many of us come often and often to hear God's holy word; we are



present at the reading of chapter after chapter, we follow it perhaps with our own eyes in our own book, and yet we make no real improvement in our knowledge of holy things? We are as far as ever from rightly understanding our own condition, and the wonders among which we live; we do not at all feel and know how near, how unspeakably near, God and Christ and His Angels and Eternity are to us. As an old Father of the Church speaks, "We have reason to fear, lest not only when Moses is read, but also when Paul is read, the veil may be upon our hearts."

And the cure for this must be the same as in the other case. When a man turns unto the Lord, that is, unto Christ, then the veil is taken away. Then a new light and an unaccustomed glory will break out and shine round our Bibles and in our Churches, and we shall begin to feel something of what the holy Patriarch felt when he cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Then, when we strive in earnest to fix our hearts on the marvellous Presence of Christ in His kingdom, nay, and in our own souls and bodies, then shall we find every verse almost in the Scriptures, and especially in the Psalms and New Testament, coming out as letters written in a certain kind of ink when they are held to the fire: there will be a deep, a holy, a divine satisfaction attending on our study of God's Book, which cannot be had any other way; and as it is written in the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, (which Psalm indeed, from beginning to end, is full of prayers and wishes for this very thing,) Almighty God will "open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things

out of His law," as He opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, to see the mountain quite full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

But, as I said, to obtain this blessing, to see so much of heaven on earth, a person must turn habitually to the Lord. And what is "turning to the Lord?" I will answer in the words of the same ancient writer whom I just now mentioned. "The better to know what it is to be turned to the Lord, let us first state what it is to be turned away from Him. Every person, who, while the words of the Law are in reading, is occupied with matters of ordinary talk, is turned away from the Lord. Every one, who, whilst the Bible is reading, is indulging thoughts of worldly business, of money, of gain, he too is turned away. Every one who is pressed with cares about his possessions, who strains himself eagerly after wealth, who longs after worldly glory and the honours of this life, every such person likewise is turned away. Nay, and the man who appears indeed clear of these faults, who is present and hears the words of the law, in countenance and eye attentive, but in heart and thoughts wandering, even he is turned away. What then is it to be turned towards the Lord? Why, to turn our backs upon all these things, and earnestly and practically, with thought and anxious care, pay regard to the word of God, and exercise ourselves in His law both day and night; if, giving up other things, we be busy with God, and employ ourselves in His testimonies, this is to be turned to the Lord."

Thus far this wise and venerable father, in his explanations of the book of Exodus, written about

one hundred years from S. John's Gospel : and it is plain what he wanted of his hearers ; he wanted them to be a great deal stricter with themselves, a great deal more conscientious than they were, in the matter of receiving divine instruction. He wanted them to come oftener to Church, and when they were there to be more attentive : above all, he wanted them to be on their guard against worldly cares and thoughts, not to come with hearts brimful of their farms, their shops, their contrivances, their pleasures, their journeys.

He presses us with the remembrance of our usual ways of proceeding in earthly matters about which we take an interest : " If you want your son to be skilled in what they call good learning, if you want to make him a good scholar, or a ready speaker, do you not try to keep him clear of other pursuits which would interfere with this ? Do you not cause him to let alone other studies, and apply himself to this one only ? Masters, teachers, books, money, all other means, however expensive, are provided, until he come home with his work done and his business learned. Which of us all applies himself so to the studies of the divine Law ? Which of us all ever so laboured therein ? Who follows divine meditations with as much zeal and labour as human ? And how then dare we complain of our ignorance of that which we never tried to learn ?"

Then again he reproves them for their carelessness about what is read in Church, and says of those who talk during the service, that " when the Holy Scriptures are read, not only a veil, but even a partition, if one may call it so, and a wall, is upon their hearts."



The veil, he says, of the sense is the sound of the words: but not even so much as this comes to them, who either stay away from the assemblies, or come there and behave inattentively. What are we to say, asks he, of their chance of profiting, when even he who is present, who hears, and listens, and recollects what he hears and considers it, and inquires and informs himself about what he cannot understand, when even such an one can hardly arrive at the privilege of understanding?

Thus you see what strict attention "turning to the Lord" was then supposed to require. Now merely to attend may seem to some a simple thing enough: but those who have tried, know it to be no small effort. What with careless and profane customs, which we get into as children; with bodily infirmities; with accidental hindrances; and it may be with the crafts and assaults of evil spirits, trying to draw our attention from God's word: it will be found that he who strives always to keep up a devotional attention to God's word in His Church, is doing a great deal to bring himself into subjection; is putting himself effectually and continually in the way of grace; doubt not then, but grace will descend upon him: wonder not, if even those great things are promised him, which both Moses and S. Paul speak of: as that the veil should be taken off, and he be favoured with knowledge in God's Law: that he should be at liberty, free to serve God and keep His commandments, by the grace of His Spirit: that he should, by much and steady beholding, be changed into the image of the glory of his Lord by the power of the same Spirit. These are the infinite, the eternal

crowns, promised to attentive and devout hearing of the Scriptures. So gracious is our God, to reward so cheap a service with such outflowings of His own glory and goodness.

But then we must well observe what else is implied in that turning to the Lord, which the Apostle mentions as the condition of the veil being withdrawn. Attention by itself is not enough: children we see will sometimes attend to their lessons, in order to be praised and rewarded by those who stand by; or out of a sort of curiosity, just to know what is said; like the Athenians, who came to S. Paul, as they would to any one else, just to tell or hear some new thing; such is not the Christian attention, which God promises to reward by the removal of the veil; it must be accompanied by prayer, and must be itself of the nature of prayer; it must be such attention as holy David expresses in every part almost of 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm; where he says over and over, "Teach me Thy statutes; teach me Thy commandments; incline mine ear unto Thy testimonies; give me understanding according to Thy word; open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Thy law."

Such are the sighings, as it were, and breathings of the holy Psalmist, by which he lifted up his mind, to his God in prayer to have the veil taken away; but not even to him was that mercy vouchsafed, in this life, in any thing like the perfection, which we Christians are encouraged to hope for: since "many prophets and kings desired to see the things that we see, and do not see them."

And though we know more already than Abraham or David could know on earth, still we have Apostoli-

cal warrant for hoping to know more yet, if we really pray for it. "If any man lack wisdom," says S. James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." And our Saviour Himself said, "In the day of the Gospel ye shall ask no questions of Me; . . . whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." He will deny you no knowledge which you ask for duly in My name, as members of Me and according to the rules of My kingdom. Such was the express promise of Jesus Christ: and sooner or later, in this world or in the next, it will have its accomplishment in every one of His attentive, devout obedient disciples.

I say, obedient; because, without all question, Christian obedience is a great condition, the great condition, of all the promises we have heard. Without this, turning to the Lord is but a mockery, and it is vain to think of the veil being taken away.

Thus, suppose any one wanted to know the true doctrine of circumcision, and of baptism, which is as S. Paul says, the circumcision made without hands, the circumcision of the heart; how impossible would it be for him to receive and know it in earnest, if he were all the time indulging filthy lusts! He might say the words rightly, he might put them together skilfully, he might know a great deal of the matter, as far as that kind of knowledge goes, which is necessary to convey it to others; but he could not possibly know it in the sense of feeling and agreeing to it. His eyes are still blinded, and the veil is upon his heart, in respect of this doctrine of purity and chastity; nor can his eyes ever be opened, or the veil



taken away, until he have most bitterly and humbly repented of his uncleanness, repented of it as David did, who feared nothing so much, as that it would cause God to take His Holy Spirit from him. Penitence and humiliation, not learning or study, is the way to recover that eye of the soul, that spiritual wisdom, which uncleanness more especially deprives man of.

Penitence, therefore, and self-denial, may be mentioned as the last circumstances which mark a sinner's truly turning to the Lord, and so obtaining grace to see beyond the veil, into the hidden meaning of the Scriptures.

Fasting, we find, both in the Old Testament and in the New, was greatly encouraged in God's servants, desiring a more perfect knowledge of His ways.

Thus, when Daniel "set his face before the Lord his God, to seek by prayer and supplication, and fasting, and sackcloth and ashes," he was encouraged by no less a reward than the coming of the Angel Gabriel, to reveal to him the certainty and exact time of the perfect atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be offered up seventy times seven years afterwards.

Moses fasted forty days and nights, before he saw the glory of the Lord, and so was illumined, as we read, with heavenly brightness.

Elijah afterwards, in Horeb also, was prepared by a like miraculous fast to have a hearing of God's still small voice, the voice which declares the deep evangelical mysteries.

And our Blessed Lord Himself, being full of the Holy Ghost, fasted forty days and nights, to shew

the mysterious connexion which there is between high spiritual gifts, and humble and wise refusal of earthly enjoyments.

And so we find the Apostles, in the Acts, fasting with their prayers, when they wanted God's direction more than usual for some great Church action ; such as laying hands on others to be messengers of Christ.

This, then, is turning to the Lord—attentiveness, prayer, obedience, self-denial ; if either one of these be wanting, there is no promise that the veil shall be taken off, which lies between us and the true meaning of the Church and the Bible, the mysterious presence of Christ every where in His kingdom. If these were all seriously practised, not one, but all of them, it may be we should find a great deal more unity of opinion, and the Church would no longer be afflicted with the perplexing sight of persons, to all appearance equally good and holy, differing on great and high points of practical religion.

As in Mount Calvary, He destroyed once for all the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that was spread over all nations ; so for each soul that shall so turn to Him, He will take away, sooner or later, the veil which hinders it in particular from discerning His true light ; and still, as the veil is being removed, their faces, like that of Moses, will grow brighter, and their brethren, seeing it, will fear, as Aaron and the rest when they saw Moses : Christ will shine reflected in the life and conversation of those, who in purity and self-denial contemplate Him as He is in His Church ; and the rest, seeing them, will feel His Presence and fear Him.

And, finally, as Moses at our Lord's Transfiguration saw *that* in course of real accomplishment, which in figure and shadow God had shewed him in Mount Sinai long before, saw the skirts of the glory of God, the Incarnate Son glorified, and partook himself in His brightness (for it is said that Moses and Elias appeared in glory), so shall it be one day with all who faithfully turn to Christ; and in the mean time His Spirit is with them to change them, unknown to themselves (for Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone), after the One Image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; that is, with such power and virtue as one might expect from the Most High God dwelling in men's souls to make and keep them members of Christ.

But as His working is silent, so let us be content to walk silently on in the good way, and mournfully too, if we have been wilful sinners; not seeking even ourselves to know exactly, much less for others to take notice, where we are in our Christian course, but ever turning our faces from the world and from ourselves, to Him, Who is our Sun and Shield, the Light in Whom we may see light, Jesus Christ, the everlasting Light of God's kingdom.



## SERMON XLIII.

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OUR SUFFICIENCY IS NOT OF OURSELVES:  
IT IS OF GOD.

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 COR. iii. 5.

*“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.”*

It might seem to any one who reads S. Paul's Epistles with no more attention than people ordinarily practise, as if the Apostle were often times praising himself, speaking highly of his own doings and abilities. And persons might imagine that his example may justify them in indulging favourable thoughts, and uttering boastful words, of themselves. But when we come to consider, we shall find that the Apostle in such cases is never in fact speaking for his own glory. He is always doing one or other of two things: either he is teaching men to have due respect for his *office* and his *work*, as a parent might press a child to be dutiful and thankful: or else he is telling them very earnestly of the greatness of the *calling* which they had *in common* with him, our Christian calling, which belongs to all alike, and how dreadful the end must be, if they swerve away from it.

For example, where he says, “I laboured more

abundantly than they all<sup>a</sup>,” “I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles<sup>b</sup>,” “I ought to have been commended of you<sup>c</sup> :” he is tenderly upbraiding them, as a father might his son : a sort of thing, which no man would call boasting or self-conceit. Again, where he utters such sentences as these, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me<sup>d</sup> :” “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death<sup>e</sup> :” “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God<sup>f</sup> :” in all such sayings the humble and holy Apostle is speaking not of himself personally, but of all Christians, all members of Christ, who have not forfeited their baptismal grace. His language is always one and the same concerning them. Without Christ they can do nothing: in and by Christ they can do all things. Left to themselves, they are less than nothing, and vanity: partaking of the Divine Nature by their union with the Son of God, they are in a certain sense, as the Psalm says, “gods, and they are all the children of the Most Highest<sup>g</sup>.” And S. Paul speaks to them, and of himself, accordingly. He cannot bear for Christians to behave and speak, as though they had no more help than heathens. He is always telling them of the great things they have received, and of the dreadful overwhelming account which will one day be demanded of all who have neglected those gifts. He will not suffer the least of us to fancy, that having

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 5.<sup>c</sup> Ib. xii. 11.<sup>d</sup> Phil. iv. 13.<sup>e</sup> Rom. viii. 2.<sup>f</sup> Gal. ii. 20.<sup>g</sup> Ps. lxxxii. 6.

but one talent, he may safely hide that talent in the earth. Open his epistles where you will, you will find great and wonderful things said of the glories and privileges of Christians; mean, low, base things said of what men are without Christ. Be not slothful, he seems to say; for Christ the Lord is in you, and is anything too hard for the Lord? and yet again, Be not proud, for nothing that you do well is your own. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it<sup>h</sup>?"

This being S. Paul's ordinary way of speaking, we may readily understand that he means much the same in the passage which is read for this day's Epistle. "We, as ministers of Jesus Christ, have great trust towards God through Christ: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." As if he had said, We think very much of the work we have to do with you: we know that it is a very high and awful, nay even a miraculous work. We know that as Moses had written on tables of stone the Ten Commandments, to bring them to the children of Israel, so we are appointed to write the New Law, "not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart." And what the end will be to each one among our hearers, we know not, we only know that it will be a final and unchangeable end: everlasting death or everlasting life. O, it is a grievous burthen indeed: "who is sufficient for these things?" what mortal sinful man can bear the thought of being so entrusted by his

<sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 7.



Maker, that the gain or loss of his brother's soul shall depend on him? Who is sufficient for these things? That is the question: the answer is in the text: We are sufficient; all are sufficient: all whom Christ has sent in His Name: not of ourselves, "but our sufficiency is of God." We are in ourselves utterly weak and helpless, but we are sufficient to do His work, because He hath made us so. Let us consider both parts of this statement, applying them to our own practice as we go on.

1. We have no power of our own to do good: we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. This indeed is quite plain of itself to any one who believes in God. Speaking exactly, we have no power without Him, to do either good or evil. We cannot lift a hand, or move a finger, without His preserving aid. But the Apostle, I suppose, is speaking more especially of power to will and to do that which is good: and in this we know that we are left very helpless ever since our first father transgressed. If we have a faint will, the remains of our first goodness, yet we cannot bring it to good effect. We are such as S. Paul describes the natural man. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Even when men know right from wrong, and in their hearts acknowledge how much better the right and good is of the two, how very seldom do they find it in their hearts to do it at once, for love of God, because it is right! And if this be so among baptized persons, what might we not expect, in the way of wickedness, among those who are left to walk altogether in their own ways? What do we not find

among them, that is evil, and shocking, and impure? One would think that no one, who looks abroad into the world, no one who does but seriously watch his own thoughts and ways for an hour, could expect to be good and pure of himself: and yet, so strange and perverse are we, that we need continually to be reminded of this. Few of us really receive the saying, that all our goodness, if we are at all good, comes from without ourselves. We own it in words, but we do not really receive it.

For consider a little: if we really and actually believed this saying, and put our minds to it, that we have no goodness of our own, how could we be so anxious, as most of us are, to be praised and approved by men? Surely if we truly understood ourselves, it would rather come with a pang to our hearts, every time a kind friend praised us. We should feel that he would speak very differently, if he knew all that we know of ourselves. We should be ashamed and afraid to accept his kind words: they would be a trouble to us: we should wish to hide our heads. Again, did we really believe our own unworthiness, I suppose it would make us much more patient of reproach. We should say as David did, "Let mine enemy curse, for God hath said unto him, Curse David." Though we might not deserve the particular charge brought against us, yet being conscious that on some other ground, unknown perhaps to men, we are open to all his reproofs, we could not find it in our heart to be so very angry with them. This would be our feeling, did we truly believe what we say, when we call ourselves miserable sinners.

Not that I suppose men altogether unbelieving as

to their own sinfulness. They believe it in a way, but they do not lay it to heart. They know that it is a sad thing, but they know not within the ten thousandth part, how very sad and evil it is. And it is the same with the other part of the Apostle's doctrine in the text. Persons will confess, in a general way, that any good which is in themselves, or in any one else, cometh of God: but they are very slow even to acknowledge in words the duty which follows upon this confession, much less are they willing to make it the rule of their behaviour.

2. For observe how the matter stands, when we come really to believe and consider in our hearts that all our sufficiency is of God: i. e. that every slight beginning of good, every the least tendency to repentance and relenting in sin, every faint spark of love to God or our neighbour, every low, feeble emotion of the fear of God, cometh indeed of His Holy Spirit, is a token that He has not yet quite forsaken us. Remember; That good Spirit is Almighty, and can work in us what good He pleases. If these low faint beginnings came of ourselves, well might we suppose that there was nothing particular in them, that as they came, so they would go, and be as though they had never been. But now that we know them to come of God, who shall say how much good they may do us, provided only we attend to them, cherish and obey them? who can measure the guilt we bring upon ourselves, by neglecting and turning away from them? I pray God write it in all our hearts, how very dangerous it is to trifle with the silent breathings and whispers of the heavenly Comforter. Especially in those who have



unhappily fallen into bad habits, and who are living in any serious sin, those secret scruples and wishes after something better are like the last sparks of life in a sinking frame: if they be slighted, much more if they be stifled on purpose, the only chance of recovery is gone: but if they be nursed and made much of, the patient may be saved, and health may return. Never then let us despair, either for ourselves or any one else, so long as God mercifully continues our trial: His breath is all-powerful, and can quicken the faintest embers, which seem smothered and all but dead, into a bright and clear flame. Never despair, but for God's sake lose no time. It is not yet too late: but it may be too late to-morrow. God is Almighty and all-merciful, but He is also All-righteous: and He has bound Himself by His own righteousness to grant no repentance nor amendment to such as die in deadly sin. On Him depends all that you can do: and you know not, how soon He may withdraw His preserving Hand and cause you to sink into the grave. At any rate you know that you are fast approaching towards it, and that when you are once there, "there is no device nor counsel nor knowledge<sup>1</sup>," to change your condition, to turn you from sin to holiness, to make your peace, if you died unreconciled to God. And O how terribly will the charge against you be aggravated at the last day, when it shall be said, God Himself gave this man sufficiency of grace, had he but chosen to follow it on, but he would not; he chose to trust in himself: he thought he was sufficient to think out and act out his own salvation: and what is to become of him

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. ix. 10.

now ? God forbid that anything like this should be said to any of us hereafter : and yet who can help being afraid ? For indeed I fear that there are ways of thinking among us, aye, and ways of speaking and acting too, even among those who think themselves good Christians, which, if indulged, can only end in bringing such an awful sentence upon us. I mean such a thing as this : suppose any one should openly or secretly say, "I shall not trouble myself about going to Church, nor about minding the priest's advice : I shall not trouble myself about sacraments and ordinances. For why ? If a man is to be saved at all, it is himself who must save him : outward things are nothing : " is not this in fact saying, I am sufficient of myself, I will think every thing of myself, I will not have my sufficiency of God ? And yet I fear something like this—not often I hope quite so profane, but something like it is very frequently said and thought among Christians, and has a good deal to do with the sad neglect of sacraments and Church, prayers and all sorts of pastoral discipline, which those who love Christ find more and more reason to lament. People think and say, their salvation is a personal and private matter between their God and their own souls, and that they can do without human helps, and so they give themselves leave to go to Church as seldom as they please, take no advice, seek no care, of their Pastor, live and too often die, without thought of Christ's Holy Communion, and I fear that not very seldom they come to deal carelessly even with their private prayers ; for *they* too are in some sort an outward form, and give them more or less trouble. Thus the Evil spirit

(for whose work but his can it be ?) will train us on by degrees, under pretence of minding only spiritual religion, to be content to live without God in the world. My brethren, stop your ears against him. Listen not to any man's talk, however specious, nor to anything out of books, however well-sounding, that will make you think lightly of Christ's holy Catholic Church, in which we all profess to believe, and of the ordained and regular means of grace therein. Be quite certain that such ways can end in nothing else but setting up each man as sufficient for himself, instead of his humbly accepting that sufficiency which God offers him in communion with His Son.

And when you have made up your mind, humbly to serve God in His Church and in His Holy Communion, there seeking grace to keep your baptismal vows, be on your guard against this other snare: that it is no use for you to be labouring after perfection, that a certain degree of goodness is needful, but *that* once gained, you may set yourself at ease. I suppose this to be a very natural thought: But it never can be right: for hear our Lord's own words: "<sup>j</sup>Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Hear the Eternal Father Himself: "<sup>k</sup>Be ye holy, for I am Holy." Hear one of the greatest of saints: "<sup>l</sup>I count not myself to have attained, but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

<sup>j</sup> S. Matt. v. 48.<sup>k</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 16.<sup>l</sup> Phil. iii. 13, 14.



And in another place he says, “<sup>m</sup> Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.” You see he speaks to all Christians and so does our Lord Himself. Therefore all Christians are bound never to think they have done enough : Christ is their appointed example : they are not to rest till they have come up to His standard : i. e., they are never to rest.

But who, you will say, is sufficient for these things? It is no new question : the Apostle asked it long ago : and answered it too, both for us and for himself. “Who is sufficient,” do you ask? I will tell you. God is sufficient, and because He is so, we are so too ; our sufficiency is of God. Though we can do nothing by ourselves, we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us : not all things at once, but all in due time, and upon using the appointed means. Though of ourselves we are utterly ignorant and helpless, yet in the power of Christ’s Spirit, given us in Baptism, increased in Confirmation, refreshed in penitency, cherished by every good work and prayer, we may know and perform whatever is needed for our perfection. For instance : when a young person first begins to think seriously of going to the Holy Communion, as of something which he has to do himself, he may well feel alarmed at the awful work all at once seeming to come upon him : his whole self to be examined, all his sins to be repented of, all that he is and all that he has, to be offered up as a sacrifice of faith and obedience on the Altar of his Lord and Saviour. Well may he say, How shall I ever compass such a work as this? But he must resolve in courageous

faith. He must make that venture for Christ's sake, assured that he will not be left alone. The hand that was stretched out to S. Peter, when he was invited to come to Christ on the water, will be stretched out to such a young Christian: he will find by happy experience; that although he had no sufficiency of himself, God made him sufficient even for that great thing. But he will not find this all at once: he will still feel his own imperfection, still aim, at each next following Communion, to receive more worthily than at the last, and still, by God's mercy, his aim and his prayer will be answered. And thus all his life long he will be ever seeking more grace, and ever prove sufficient for it. And so in all other virtues, all other parts of holy living. By renouncing and denying yourself, and seeking always to come nearer to God in every thing, you will obtain from Him a new and better self, and will be able in the end to do things which in the beginning were very far above you. Even as the holy Psalmist describes the constant happy progress of humble believers. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are Thy ways: who going through the vale of misery, use it for a well, and the pools are filled with water: they will go from strength to strength, and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion." Their path will be as a shining light, that brighteneth more and more unto the perfect day, the Eternal, blessed vision of the Most High.

▪ Ps. lxxxiv. 5, 6, 7.

## SERMON XLIV.

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### CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. JOHN ix. 31.

*“ We know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.”*

THERE are certain words of the collect for this day, which it may do us much good to consider thoroughly, and bear in mind : I mean, where we ask God to “ forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid.” The whole Collect, besides being a most beautiful prayer in itself, is also a treasure of instruction concerning prayer : teaching us that He is most ready to hear, far more so than we to pray : as He speaks by the prophet, “<sup>a</sup> Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear : ” whereas we, as our Lord says, will not come unto Him, that we may have life. Again it teaches us of His great goodness and bounty : that He is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve. As He is most willing to hear our petitions, so is He most free and gracious in answering them. We come to Him in a

<sup>a</sup> Is. lxx. 24.



kind of childish faith, desiring such blessings as our frail weak hearts can imagine. Life and health, kind friends and daily bread, forgiveness of sins, ease of body and comfort of mind, and He gives us infinitely more, communion with Himself, and all else which is meant when we speak of life everlasting.

Now, the very greatness of these blessings may well make us tremble when we kneel down to ask for them: the very abundance of God's mercy, which we pray Him to pour down upon us, may well make our conscience afraid. For what is it to have our conscience afraid? It is, of course, having something on our minds, which it frightens us to think of: some part of our past and present doings, which we cannot bear to recollect, it is so mournful and shocking, and concerning which we know not, how much evil it may be now doing, and may do hereafter, to ourselves and others. It is as if a child carried about with him the remembrance and shame of something which he had done when his father was out of sight, and came, with that remembrance, to ask some great favour of his father. Surely, the more kindly his father invited him, the more he encouraged him with the hope of exceeding bounty, so much the more would the child's heart smite him, recollecting how little he had done to deserve such kindness. Surely, if there be any true goodness in him, he will long to make his confession and to humble himself before that loving parent, before he receive the tokens of his love. He will feel like a deceiver, as if what was done for him would prove a curse and not a blessing.

We cannot indeed deceive the Almighty, we know very well that He reads what is written in the bottom

of our hearts. Our misdeeds are before Him, and our secret sins in the light of His Countenance. We know that we cannot deceive Him, yet well may we feel ashamed, as if we were trying to deceive Him; well may we draw back, humbled and full of deep fear, when we are on our knees, and the thought comes over us, what we have been and what we are. The blind man whom our Saviour healed, even before he was made a Christian, knew by such light as he had that, the wicked cannot pray acceptably. "We know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth His will, him He heareth." God heareth not sinners, wilfully continuing such: and we know that we all are sinners: every one of us can remember many things fearfully contrary to God's holy will and law: some alas! have so lived, that the more they look back on past years, the more it seems to them like one great continuing sin. This we know: and we know also that every wilful sin whatever leaves on the heart a stain, a blot, an unsoundness: and as the lepers of old time trembled and stood afar off; as that poor diseased woman with the issue of blood feared to touch the hem of Christ's garment; as the unclean and unsound in body were forbidden to come near the tabernacle: so may our consciences be afraid when we come to pray.

We are assured, however, by His holy and gracious word, that a fountain has been opened for all this sin and uncleanness. If we sincerely endeavour to repent of it and renounce it, we may draw near, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ask pardon and grace even of Him Who most entirely hates it. Even as sinners, we may pray without offence,

if we are sincerely trying to put our sin away from us. But so deceitful are these poor hearts of ours, that there is the greatest danger of our going wrong, by endeavouring to reconcile our prayers with our sins. We are too apt secretly to cherish some one or more favourite lust or corruption, yet soothing ourselves all the while by the thought that we are right in other things, perhaps even in most things; and at any rate, that we are punctual and constant in our prayers. Now Almighty God has told us most positively that this is what He cannot and will not endure. This is playing the hypocrite with Him: and how earnestly, how often, did His Son pronounce a woe upon all hypocrites! The Psalmist says plainly, "If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart, the Lord will not hear me." And S. James, we must ask "in faith nothing wavering," else we may not expect to receive any thing from the Lord. What is that, "nothing wavering?" It seems to mean, when a man asks God's grace to do good, yet is not steadily purposed in his mind to do it: when he prays, "Lead us not into temptation," yet in his secret heart would rather than not meet with some violent temptation, that he may have the more excuse for sinning. Shocking as this is, it is too true an account of what passes in many men's minds when they pray: they do not ask in simple faith: they are double-minded, unstable in all their ways; wanting to serve God and Mammon both; bent upon reigning with Christ, yet indulging their own lusts here. No wonder if the Apostle say of such, They must not think to "receive any thing of the Lord."



Do I then mean to say, that if you have any love of your past sins in you, you are altogether unfit to pray, so as that your very prayers will be a sin? Alas, my brethren, one might almost cry out, Who shall live if God doeth so? Too certainly do the roots and evil beginnings of sin abide in those even, who sincerely repent, for a long time after the commencement of their repentance. But then they struggle and contend perpetually against those evil remains. And here lies the difference between true though imperfect penitents, and those whom God threatens not to hear, and of whom He says, They shall receive nothing from Him. The true penitent, though in proportion to his imperfection he feel the stirrings of the old bad desire within him, does not at all encourage or cherish it. It grieves and vexes him, he strives and prays against it. He prays, not in words only; *that*, any hypocrite may do, but in the very deep of his heart, 'Lead me not, O Lord, in to this temptation, suffer it not to become too strong for me.' No man ever prayed thus in earnest, and continued his prayer, without being heard. But there is great danger, lest while we say the good words, and feel that they are good, and wish that we could entirely enter into them, we may yet cherish in our secret souls a love and longing for the evil and forbidden thing, such that when it comes near us, we shall be sure to fall: our goodness may prove "as the morning cloud and as the early dew which passeth away."

Few of us, it is to be feared, have passed far through life, without sad experience of this kind: and for this reason, as well as for our actual sins, we do well to have our conscience afraid when we come

before God in prayer. The more we know of ourselves, the more cause generally have we to fear, lest some hidden affection to our former sins yet lurk in our heart, a foul and corrupt spot, marring the sweet savour of our sacrifice.

Our consciences ought to be afraid when we pray : but are they so for the most part ? I fear not : I fear, my brethren, that we are little aware of our own true condition. Many persons speak of praying to God as if it were a thing which any one who pleased may do at any time. If you ask them, e.g. what a sinner, must do to be forgiven, they will make answer, 'he must pray to God ;' and so they settle the matter with themselves. But be not deceived, brethren : prayer, real prayer, is not so easy a thing. Any one of course may at any time kneel down and say a prayer, if he knows the words ; but do not flatter yourselves that any one can easily *pray* at any time. Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God, and the heart, to be lifted up, must be turned away in some measure from evil things, and so real amendment must have begun. Without a practical change of this kind, without denying ourselves in our conduct and behaviour, we do not really pray, though we try to employ ourselves in prayer, because our heart does not mount upwards to God. Those then who talk of prayer as if it were a light and easy matter, are little likely to come before God with that awe and trembling of conscience, which is most suitable for sinners before their Judge.

Consider again ; if our consciences were really afraid, should we not be very attentive, very reverential all through our prayers ? Surely we should

try at least to be so, were it only that we may avoid adding sin to sin. For all men know it to be a sin, a kind of taking God's Name in vain, when they allow themselves to be inattentive in prayer. If therefore your conscience be sore and tender from the remembrance of other sins, you will be greatly afraid of affronting God by going off to earthly thoughts while you are seeming to address Him. Therefore, when we see persons plainly inattentive in Church Services, plainly neglectful of outward reverence in their devotions: whatever else may be right or wrong in those persons, at least they openly declare by their behaviour that their consciences are not afraid: they do not appear before God as sinners fearing punishment and humbled in heart. For example: whereas the Prayer-Book directs that Christian people coming to serve God in His house, should confess their sins and receive absolution on their knees, and whereas nature herself teaches that such as have offended their king and come for pardon should ask and receive it in the most humble way; is it not manifest that those who can kneel and do not, at the confession and absolution more especially, *seem* as if they thought very lightly of their own sins; as if they cared very little to be forgiven by Almighty God? They *seem* as if they had no transgressions, of which their conscience is afraid: as if they were thanking God in their hearts that they are not as other men are. I do not say that such thoughts are really passing within them: rather I should imagine that the more part continue sitting out of mere thoughtlessness, and that some who would rather kneel are kept from it by a sort of bashfulness and a dread of being no-



ticed: but whatever be in their minds, their behaviour seems to say for them that their consciences are not afraid. And is not this an alarming thought, when you think of the lives, which many, perhaps most of them, have been leading? Which of us all, my brethren, is so free from remembered sin, that he has no need at all to ask pardon, no particular reason to rejoice at receiving absolution for it?

One very sad thing is, that men really come in no very long time to forget their old sins, as if they had never been. Not considering them, so as to confess and bewail them constantly, they can hardly imagine, after a time, that they are the persons who did such things: they are quite affronted and surprised, if even a clergyman put them in mind of it for their good. This accounts for much of their seeming irreverence in prayer: they do not now feel what great need they have of our Lord: the sin was done so very long ago; it is worn nearly out of their own mind; surely, they think, it will be worn out of God's book: in this respect, they esteem themselves no longer guilty: so far, as they think, there would be no meaning in their kneeling down and calling themselves miserable sinners: although even so it would seem becoming to return thanks for so great a mercy to the King of heaven and earth on their knees. The truth however is, that as long as men live on the earth, they have no right to behave as if their sins, committed since they were Christians, were clean blotted out. That prodigal son did not so, who is the pattern of Christian penitents. When he came to know how merciful his father would be, he made just the same lowly confession, which he had before

determined on in his own mind. It is therefore very unsafe, very unchristian, to forget our sins, and to decline humbling ourselves, because it is long, since we sinned. Holy David, that other great pattern of penitency, washed his couch every day with his tears. If God have not given us such contrition, at least let us kneel to Him weekly in Church : lest if we forget our sins, or care little for them, we find ourselves (O fearful thought !) unforgiven at last.

In short : To be heard in prayer, two things are necessary. A man must be a worshipper of God, and must do His Will. How is he a worshipper of God, if he come not before Him with that deep reverence for God, and bitter sense of his own transgression, which will cause him gladly to obey all the rules of the Church, made to help him in obtaining pardon, and among the rest, this of kneeling in prayer ? At the same time let us ever remember that to worship Him, whether on our knees or prostrate before Him, is nothing, except we do His Will. Outward reverence without obedience is nothing : yet is there no full obedience without so much outward reverence at least, as the Church enjoins, and health and like circumstances allow. Both must be practised, else He hears us not. We must both worship Him, and do His Will : else are we before Him as men who do not pray : and if we do not pray, what is to become of us ?

## SERMON XLV.

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### THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 Cor. iii. 6.

*“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”*

THE Church calls upon us this week to consider what are our prevailing sins ; what are the things whereof our conscience is afraid, and to ask God's pardon for them. “Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid.” Such is the petition our mother puts into our mouth. She takes it for granted that there are things whereof our conscience is afraid, wrong things which we know of in ourselves, and for which we need and long to be forgiven. Take notice of this, my brethren. If a man be disposed to think altogether well of himself, if there be no particular sin or failure which hangs heavy on his heart when he thinks on his condition towards God, that very circumstance is a reason for him to fear that he is in a sad and dangerous way. God's promises are



to the tender conscience, to the soul that goeth stooping and feeble <sup>a</sup>, to him that has no good opinion of himself; who fears, not without hope and thankfulness, yet really fears, when all seems to be going on well with him.

Now suppose such a man as this sitting alone and keeping silence, suppose him trying, as he will of course try very often, to sum up the things which may and ought to make his conscience afraid, he will be not unlikely to find many instances, in which he has sinned by taking the letter instead of the spirit of Christ's law, transgressing thereby another most serious warning, set before us by Holy Church in the Epistle for this same Sunday, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." This is the special subject, my brethren, concerning which I desire to speak to you to-day. I wish to point out as distinctly as I can, what the letter is, what the spirit: in what various ways men are tempted to take the one for the other; what sin and misery is occasioned by their doing so, deadly sin, incurable misery, for he saith, "The letter killeth:" and how great a blessing waits assuredly on all, who in all their doings are dutiful and careful to serve God in spirit and in truth, not resting satisfied with the mere outward letter: as he saith again, "The spirit giveth life."

First then, for the exact meaning of the two words here used by S. Paul. The letter, is the very word of God, in speech, in writing or in memory, understood according as men would naturally understand it, mere heathen men, not asking God to help them: the spirit, is the same word, understood according to

<sup>a</sup> Is. xxxv. 3, 4. Bar. ii. 18.

the teaching of the Holy Spirit of God which is to be sought by earnest and diligent prayer.

Now since both are of God, both the word spoken, and the sense which the Holy Ghost teaches us to put upon it, we might wonder how either of the two should harm or kill us. But consider how it was in the case of the old law, the law of Moses, and the use made of it by the Jews. The Apostle directs our attention to this, calling upon us, as well as upon the Corinthians to whom he was writing, to receive the New Testament, i. e. the Gospel, as a ministration not of the letter but of the spirit, and therefore not of death but of life. And he signifies that the Old Testament, as taken apart from the New, the law as taken apart from the Gospel would prove to those who should so take it, death, because it would be the letter taken apart from the spirit. Not for any fault in the law itself, which is, from beginning to end, the good word of God, as the Apostle writes in another place, “<sup>b</sup>The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” But as it is with so many of the good gifts of God, so it is with respect to the outward knowledge of Him, the revelation of His law and Will. That knowledge, which was ordained to life, became death unto the great body of the Jewish nation, because in their sin and worldly mind they refused to read it rightly, taking the letter of it, the mere word which it speaks, apart from its inward and spiritual meaning. I will try and explain this by a few examples.

The law of Moses, as you all know, spake to the ear concerning temporal blessings<sup>c</sup>, a land flowing

<sup>b</sup> Rom. vii. 2.      <sup>c</sup> Lev. xxvi. 4—9, Deut. xxviii. 3—13.

with milk and honey, rain in due season, the land yielding her increase, and the trees of the field yielding their fruit: peace in the land, each one lying down and none to make him afraid, no evil beast, no sword going through the land, their enemies falling before them, five of them chasing a hundred, and a hundred putting ten thousand to flight, and they were made fruitful and multiplied; blessed in the city and in the field, in the fruit of their body and the fruit of their ground, the increase of their kine and the flocks of their sheep: all people of the earth afraid of them, they were to lend unto many nations and not to borrow, they were to be above only, and not beneath. Or as it is in the Psalm, their sons were to be “<sup>d</sup>as the young plants, and their daughters as the polished corners of the temple.” Or as in Isaiah<sup>e</sup>, gold and incense and precious stones were to be brought, all nations and kingdoms were to serve them. In all these and the like prophecies, God had spoken unto the Jews, as in a parable, of spiritual blessings intended for the Christian Church: and such as were spiritually minded took the words accordingly, but the ordinary sort set their hearts upon the gold and silver, the beauty, wealth and greatness of this world: and so when Christ came in poverty and humility, not at all in the greatness of this world, and they found that they must give up all these things in the outward sense, and take up their cross and follow Him, to receive the promises in their true and spiritual meaning, true joys, true riches, true and everlasting life, they could not bear it, it was too hard a saying for them: taught by Caiaphas,

<sup>d</sup> Ps. cxliv. 12.<sup>e</sup> Is. lx.



they said, Let us kill Him, and the inheritance of this world shall be ours. Thus the prophetic word, taken in the words of it only, was their death: had they taken it in its spirit and meaning, it would have been life eternal. The letter killed; the spirit would have given life.

Take another example. The old Testament ensured blessings unto Abraham's seed: Abraham had loved God and kept His commandments, and God pledged Himself to shew mercy to Abraham's seed to a thousand generations. Now the Jews of our Lord's time took this, as if it meant the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. They boasted of being Abraham's seed, and of having Abraham to their father. When S. John Baptist and our Lord reproved them for their sins, this was what came into their minds to say; but the truth instructed them in the true evangelical meaning of the promise: that it was not spoken of all who should be children of Abraham after the flesh, but only of those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who should become the spiritual seed of Abraham by being made members of Christ. Through Christ only were the promises made: they who would not believe this, but stood upon their outward, fleshly descent from Abraham, of them too might it be most truly said, that the letter of God's promise killed them, whereas the spirit would have given them life.

Thirdly, the letter or word of the law, spoken to the children of Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness, made God's blessing depend upon the outward services then appointed, such as the passover or circumcision. The uncircumcised man child shall be

cut off from his people, and whoso in the Paschal week shall eat leavened bread shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel. Now these sayings, interpreted by the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ, really meant that we Christians, being ingrafted into Christ by Baptism, must circumcise the foreskin of our hearts, all worldly and carnal lusts; and that we must put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, in order to eat the true Passover, Christ crucified, in the Holy Communion. But the unbelieving Jews would not hear of any circumcision but what is outward in the flesh, nor of any Passover but the outward and visible lamb. Here again the letter was death to them, the spirit would have given them life.

Once more: we know by our Lord's own testimony what a very perverse use the Pharisees allowed or taught their disciples to make of some of the chiefest commandments of the law of God Almighty. They said (it would seem) If you kill a man, or commit adultery, or swear by the Name of God falsely, then you are guilty, then you are in danger of His judgement: but for anything short of this, the lustful or unkind word, thought or desire, and for swearing without express mention of the Holy Name, they did not teach that it came of evil, nor did they dread God's anger upon it. Our Saviour taught far otherwise. He told them and us expressly, in His Sermon on the mount, that if men will not watch their eyes and words as well as their deeds; if they will be angry with their brethren without cause; will look on a woman to lust after her; will use themselves to swear by anything at

all (since all things belong to God); they will displease Him and endanger their souls; they will be like the foolish man who builded his house upon the sand. The Jews would not take this warning either: and their refusal to do so was death. The letter of the commandments taken by itself killed them, the spirit would have given them life.

We have seen how it was with the Jews: but which of us, my brethren, does not himself know the temptation of saying in his heart, when it is set upon a wrong thing, 'I see no express word of Scripture which forbids this thing: shew me such a word, and I will keep away from the thing: otherwise I will use my Christian liberty and do it or not as I please.' The truth answers, 'Nay, but the *kind* of thing is forbidden: and if you love your Lord in earnest, you will not wait to be told in so many words everything that He would have you do and avoid: you will employ your best attention and discretion, as a mother does who is watching a sick child, to make out what is fittest to be done: her instinct tells her a thousand things, which she feels she need not stay to ask about: the love of God, if you have it in your heart, will guide you a great way without express command.'

Thus in respect of outward religious duties, such as prayer at home and in Church, reading and hearing Scripture, receiving Holy Communion etc. I need not tell you that in each and all of these "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh alone profiteth nothing;" "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." For what good is it for any of you to come punctu-

<sup>f</sup> S. John vi. 63.



ally to be in your place here ; to come and sit before God's minister as part of His people ; and to have your heart all the while at a distance, employed perhaps about things which will rather hurt than help your devotions ?

And what if a man busy himself day by day with the precious Book of God, merely as a book, and no more ? not as in His Presence.

And, to speak a yet graver word, What is the use of eating and drinking the Holy Signs in the holiest of all ordinances, if you come carelessly and unworthily ? Alas, we know too well that it is no help, but the greatest hurt : at the Altar of the Lord more especially, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." As the sacred elements could not become the Body and Blood of Christ but through the power of Christ's Spirit, making good the words of Consecration ; so neither can any Christian receive them to his soul's health, but by the help of the same Spirit, changing the heart by His grace, and preparing it for a blessing.

A man may draw nigh perhaps, valuing himself upon his deep and true *opinions* : considering himself and those who quite agree with him to be the sound, right-judging, Catholic persons, and all others more or less wrong, like the proud Pharisees in the Gospel, who cried out, "§ This people which knoweth not the law are cursed." What shall we say to such an one ? but that he too is killing himself, ruining his own soul, very sadly, by the letter of the Creed, contenting himself to believe exactly, where he should

§ S. John vii. 49.

be praying earnestly for the Spirit to quicken his faith into loving obedience?

Or, it may be, you have allowed your heart, your frail deceivable heart, to lay hold of things present and visible, and settle itself upon them, too keenly, too entirely: and you have thought all was right and well enough, because other people accounted you respectable, and you were comfortable in your own mind. You have kept to the letter, the *surface*, the *outside* of your duty; but there has been no energy, no spirit, no real love in your work. What will be the end of this? Will it be death or life? Alas, there is at present but too much reason to fear. *Be zealous*, brother, and repent; beware lest that come upon you which is written, “<sup>h</sup> Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.”

One way or another, brethren, it is but too plain that many of us, in our dealings with our heavenly Father, have contented ourselves too much with mere outside, with mere beginnings: we have not really and truly received that saying into our hearts, “<sup>i</sup> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.” What have we done, what prayers have we said, what good rules have we set ourselves, what good persons’ help and advice have we asked; that we might obtain by degrees some notion of serving Christ in spirit not in letter only? Alas, we have been too childish, too imperfect by a great deal. The mischief which had its beginning, very

<sup>h</sup> Rev. iii. 16.

<sup>i</sup> S. Mark xii. 30.

commonly, when we were children, in our behaviour to our parents and those who had the care of us, that very same mischief we have been practising, it may be ten, twenty, fifty years, in our course of action towards our God and Saviour. Which of you that is a father, or hath servants or others under his authority, knows not how common it is, and how provoking, to have the letter of his words obeyed, while the spirit and purpose of them is entirely neglected? And yet men venture to go on affronting their Saviour throughout a long life by the like hard and hypocritical ways, and suppose themselves good Christians enough; are not aware that any special repentance is required of them when they come to die.

And one thing which encourages many in this great and sad imperfection, is their abusing the gracious promises of the Gospel, much as in their youth they abused their parents' love. The great promise of the Gospel is, that whereas on the one hand the law, taken alone, did but warn men against sin, without giving grace to avoid it, and so it killed, tended to their death, making sin more exceeding sinful, the Gospel on the other giveth life, because it brings grace to do our duty, as well as light to know it. But now it is very possible, aye and very common, to lay hold of the saving Name of Christ crucified, merely *as* a name, merely as a form of words, sinning and repenting (as they call it) and then sinning again, and in each interval of their sin professing their hope to be forgiven through Him. And so men make themselves easy, without any true re-



penitance, even in very bad ways indeed ; and in those ways, as we have often too much reason to fear, they die, and depart to meet their Judge. Persons doing so, though they little think of it, are indeed taking the letter for the spirit, trusting in a form instead of Christ.

My brethren, will you not pray with me for help to avoid these deadly errors, and in all points of Christian obedience to add the spirit to the letter ; that the Gospel may be to us, as He intended, life and not death : the holy Sacrament, salvation and not damnation : the Sign of the Son of Man, a call to us to rejoice and lift up our heads, not to mourn with the lost tribes of the earth ?

**© hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths,  
that my footsteps slip not.**











